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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXVI.

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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXVI.

MAY 1900 TO OCTOBER 1900

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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

MAY 1900.

One of Ourselves.[1]

BY L. B. WALFORD,

AUTHOR OF 'MR. SMITH,' &c.

CHAPTER XVII.

WITHOUT A FAMILY AUDIENCE.

THE door opened to admit a slender young man of medium height, with an expression of extreme seriousness on his countenance.

And it was no wonder that Lionel looked serious. From the moment that he had been told he was to go to Henham Park, he had realised that to Henham Park go he must; whatever he said, or whatever anyone else said, the thing had got to be done; and it is almost pathetic to think how much this meant to our young man.

He hated going anywhere out of his own beat. Reserved and diffident by nature, the circumstances of his boyhood and youth, the consciousness of being never wanted, always got rid of when possible, the fear of intrusion, the horror of self-assertion—all combined to freeze his blood and make it an effort to do anything strange or new.

To most young people there is something agreeable in the anticipation of making fresh acquaintances, particularly if these happen to be of a promising kind. Visions of gaiety and jollity entwine themselves into the prospect.

If there be a little natural bashfulness at the outset, it is felt

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that this will pass; while as often as not the drawback is not even there.

It was always there, a giant in size, and completely obscuring the light beyond, in Lionel Colvin's case.

Nor had the light, as a rule, been of a nature to dazzle him when its rays, such as they were, shone forth.

By this time he was stolidly quiescent in the Farrell drawing-rooms and other drawing-rooms of the sort to which he and his sisters were accustomed; he could stand still wherever he found himself, and if let alone remain standing still—or if talked to, talk back—or again if desired to render a lady a service, render it—all with perfect outward propriety and inward indifference.

The Farrells did very well; he felt equal to the Farrells. 'They are about our level, now,' he told himself.

But with Lady Blanche Massitur the case was different; the frozen blood thawed and rioted in his veins; he was ashamed of himself; ashamed to think that he loathed and yet longed to go to her house; ashamed to catch himself wondering if he should look, and act, and feel as he ought to do?

'Why should I mind? Other fellows would not mind!' he muttered. 'It's a deuce of a shame that *I* should mind;' for though not used to strong language, the strength of the case extorted it.

And then she was 'Blanche.'

A great curiosity at times overpowered every other emotion. His father's ideal, the writer of those letters so dear to their recipient, bequeathed by him as his most priceless treasure.

'Blanche!' He had never hoped, never dreamed of hoping, for such a thing as to meet 'Blanche' face to face, though it had sometimes crossed his mind that in the future there was always a possibility of hearing whether or not she still existed, were married or single, had children or the like?

It may be wondered that he had not thought of this on coming to a neighbourhood where a lady of the name resided; but 'No, no; it cannot be she,' he had early decided, for the rank and status of his wealthy neighbour seemed to preclude the idea, and he had never mentioned it even to Bet. 'There are plenty of "Blanches," it is quite a common name,' reflected he; and speedily forgot the coincidence

Now it returned to comfort him and rehabilitate him somewhat in his own esteem, as affording a reasonable motive for

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silencing chatter about Henham, whose very name he preferred not to hear whilst it was still an unknown, mysterious land.

'Do tell them to be quiet about it,' he had implored Bet; and Bet told—with additions of her own.

They could not however suppress excitement among themselves; and he saw it; and, as may be imagined, his own tremors were not allayed thereby.

He set off from the church door.

'Aren't you coming home first?' Georgie was about to run after her brother, but Bet with a firm hand held her back.

'But he's going *now*,' cried she, looking round with astonished face. 'Don't you see? He's not going back with us, though it is quite as near from our back way—oh, Bet, I wish you wouldn't,' jerking her arm from the other's grasp. 'You do hurt. I only thought that Lionel——'

Lionel however was out of hearing.

'Now you may say what you like,' quoth Bet, grimly. 'Go on——' as no result followed. 'If you must be idiotic, you must; why don't you go on?' sarcastic and triumphant.

Georgie marched off with Poll, and swung a gate in her sister's face. She had a plump little arm, and it really was sore from Bet's pinch; she felt furious with Bet.

'But they'll make it up in half an hour, and go to meet Lionel without telling me, I shouldn't wonder,' reflected Poll, who knew their ways. 'They just shan't. I'll take care they don't.'

It was not merely the heat which had ruffled the feathers of all three little birds; the tumultuous emotions of the past few days had proved too much for their nerves.

Let us return to Lionel.

His appearance within the great saloon where Lady Blanche sat, without her having caught any glimpse of his approaching figure in the avenue, of which she commanded a view, was due to his having taken a circuitous route in order not to arrive too soon.

He had walked slowly; sat on the bridge by which his sisters had dabbled in the brook; lingered here and there, consulting his watch at intervals; and at length found that by taking a round not thought of before, skirting the park and entering by farm precincts in the rear, he could just reach his destination at the fateful 'two o'clock'—on which he had started afresh briskly. The stable clock clanged its two deliberate strokes almost at the

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same instant as that in the drawing-room, and a dozen more within the mansion chimed and tinkled theirs; and Lionel gulped in his throat and rang the front-door bell ere the last ting-ting sounded.

Some one else also gulped in her throat, as Lady Blanche rose and walked half across the room to greet her guest.

She was the first to speak, as was right and proper.

'I have been watching for you from the window,' said she cheerfully—he might have been the most ordinary acquaintance by her accent; 'but I suppose you took another way?' returning to her seat, and looking suggestively towards another.

He explained that he had taken another way.

'There is some shade in the lanes, no doubt?'

There was some shade.

'And I really think this is the hottest day we have had,' proceeded Lady Blanche, easily. 'Even in Germany it was not as hot as this. My niece and I have just returned from Homburg——' and she proceeded to enlarge.

To herself she was saying: 'So like—oh, so like. The same thoughtful, earnest face; the same perfect repose of manner; the same, the very same voice, only a little lower and less decided. Lionel could speak with a great deal of decision at times.' Aloud: 'I am so glad you could come to us to-day, because, as it happens, we are alone, and it is so much pleasanter to be alone when one first meets with—your sisters have told you of the old friendship?'

He quaked. Had not Bet promised him there should be no reference to 'the old friendship'? What if it were beginning? If he were now expected to be confidential and responsive? But scarce had the thought sent a shiver through his veins, ere he perceived his terror groundless. In quite an every-day voice his hostess was proceeding:

'You cannot think how rejoiced I am to find in my old friend's daughters companions for my niece so near at hand, and just her own age. I really felt quite aggrieved to learn that so much time has been already wasted. But, after all, we are none of us likely to fly away, and there is still some of the summer, even of this summer left. You are not free often in the daytime, I understand?'

He explained that he was never free, Saturday afternoons and Sundays excepted.

'Several of my nephews tell me the same of themselves,' said

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her ladyship, with a useful remembrance of one grumbling youth, who traded on his hard lot (in reality a much easier one than Lionel's). 'So many young men are in offices nowadays. But I fancy you must do some soldiering?' smiled she, for her eye had noticed his straight back and well-poised head.

He admitted being a volunteer.

Lady Blanche thought as much, evidently plumed herself on her perspicacity, and was great on volunteering.

'She didn't look down on it, I assure you,' Lionel told his sisters afterwards.

They were getting on nicely when the luncheon gong sounded, and with the summons the younger lady appeared.

'Now I do wonder what he is like!' thought Miss Leonora, as she turned the handle of the door.

She herself was the fairest of the fair as far as hair and complexion went; not precisely what would be called a pretty girl, if one were critical as to regularity of feature, but with all the advantages of a light figure, elegance of movement, and perfect attitudes. Her frock, of a cream-coloured summer silk, with soft rufflings round throat and wrist, was further set off by a bunch of dark red roses at the waist.

He approved mentally.

'Sunday is always a hungry day,' said Lady Blanche, having also noted with approval the grave bow which acknowledged her introduction; and as the young man rose to his feet and remained standing, she rose also. 'We are all hungry people, I hope;' and she led the way to the dining-room.

Luncheon was spread on a small table at the far end of a spacious apartment, obviously only in use at meal-times; and as the three seated themselves with cheerful alacrity, and fell to work on the instant with no pause in the talk, which flowed on as though they had known each other all their lives, Lionel began to enjoy himself.

The formidable aspect of the affair vanished. He did not in the least mind being the only man present—rather liked it; became interested in topics as they rose; ere long forgot himself altogether.

That accomplished, the rest was easy. Lady Blanche well understood human nature when she elected to get over the first meeting without a family audience; and it would have amazed Bet, Poll, and Georgie to see and hear their usually impassive and impregnable brother now.

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Perhaps it was a pleasure to himself to talk. He had lived his own inner life so long, and found it so difficult to impart to sisters who did not understand him as they did each other, the interests which touched him most nearly, that to find current topics under review and himself regarded as an authority by intelligent and interested companions was an agreeable novelty.

Lady Blanche and her niece not only read the newspapers, but they knew personally several of the personages prominent at the moment, from whom items had been culled which added piquancy to the discussion of various situations with their problematical results. It was gratifying to hear that the very same contingency which had suggested itself to his own mind had been also present to that of Lady Blanche's kinsman, who, as it happened, was pulling the strings of the department which had the affair in hand.

It was delightful to find that he had seen further than most in penetrating the worthlessness of a rumour which he was now assured had no foundation. He was applauded for his perspicacity. Lady Blanche was afraid there were few who had not been deceived by the plausibility of the report.

'I feel sure you would like to meet my cousin,' said she, as they rose from the table; 'he is an interesting man, and often runs down to us for a Sunday. I must remember next time he comes.'

She knew what she was doing; could gauge the pleasure she was giving; and though the young man wondered afterwards if he had said enough, or indeed if he had said anything at all in response, was perfectly satisfied.

'Let us come into the picture gallery,' she suggested; and Lionel was shown Vandycks and Holbeins, Romneys and Lelys, Gainsboroughs and Greuzes, among which he would have been sadly astray had it not chanced that in his dreary leisure hours of earlier date he had occasionally, from sheer lack of anywhere else to go with an empty pocket, betaken himself to the National Gallery, and gazed and pondered there. The experience stood him now in good stead. He did not feel ignorant; once or twice he even made a hit.

'You know more than I do about them,' laughed Leonora, having appealed to her aunt, and found herself in the wrong on a contested point.

Presently they came to portraits of more recent date, and paused in front of one somewhat conspicuously placed, no one saying a word.

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It was the full-length figure of a young girl, robed in white, her only ornaments roses.

'Oh!' said Lionel, fastening his eyes upon it, and he stepped closer with a sudden eagerness, while Lady Blanche, after a glance, turned away. She could not look at him, nor exhibit her face at the moment.

What would he think? Would he?—was he?—yes, it was plain he knew; something in that silent gaze told he knew.

'That was done just before her marriage,' murmured Leonora in a gentle undertone. 'She says it flattered her; but no one else thought so. She wanted to have it taken down after—I mean she thought it ought to be at Downing Hall,' hastily.

He understood. Only at Downing Hall had been exhibited that bright joyousness of expression, that radiance of youth, that arch, smiling, glowing beauty. Only when love and hope were warm, and all the world was fair, and the springs of life were bubbling in rainbow hues.

This then was his father's 'Blanche'? Those the fond eyes which had gazed into his; those the lips he had pressed; that the golden head from which the curl, still soft and shining in the faded pocket-book, had been taken?

Yet, strange to say, he did not wish he were alone to look and think. That Blanche herself had moved quietly aside was indeed an unconscious relief; he preferred not to speak to or to be spoken to by the dignified, gracious woman, who seemed, as she doubtless was, another creature from that which had sprung into being beneath the painter's hands; but another presence did not jar upon him; he did not wish Leonora away also.

The two stood so long in mute survey that Lady Blanche, who had herself sunk into a dream, woke up to a vague consciousness of neglect, and a fear lest inadvertently she had betrayed emotion which was being tacitly respected by her young companions. In the interval she had seen much; but to them her girlish portrait, eliciting possibly a faint, superficial interest, could have no tale to tell; she must not let her vanity be deceived by their lingering in front of it. 'Tiresome of me,' muttered she; 'perhaps he even thinks it was a trap to catch a compliment, an affectation of modesty, in order to let him speak out his admiration to Leonora;' and she turned quickly.

'I was thinking that perhaps we had come to an end of all we had to show indoors, Leonora—at any rate, for this time; we have some odds and ends that might be interesting on a wet day,

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but to-day is too lovely to be wasted over them. Suppose we come out? Oh no, you are not going yet,' with laughing decision, as Lionel, quick to take a supposed hint, began murmurs of departure. 'Oh dear, no; we cannot spare you for a long time yet. Leonora and I usually camp out on Sunday afternoons, and,' pointing across a velvet sward to shade beyond, 'over there is our camping-ground; we have coffee—ah! there is the coffee going out now,' as footmen were seen issuing from a low door, carrying trays upon which the sun glinted invitingly.

'What a beautiful garden!' murmured Lionel, his eye drinking it all in, an intense, inexpressible pleasure stimulating and yet subjugating his senses. All around seemed strange and yet natural. It was natural to be looking from the mullioned window over the brilliant flower-beds beneath, and from them to the soft green turf and cool shrubbery on every side; anon to raise his eyes, and view through vistas sloping this way and that, the undulating park and far-stretching landscape glowing in summer heat.

Could that blue beyond be the common country which had always seemed so uninteresting to him, as inhabited by ordinary mortals monotonous in their mediocrity?

Could it really be himself who was now within the charmed, invisible domain, upon whose boundaries he had hitherto gazed listlessly, considering them too impregnable even for envy?

The odd thing was, that with all the strangeness he felt at home, in his native element. He had not merely no desire to depart, he longed to stay. The frank command was music in his ear. He experienced a thrill of ineffable delight as he turned to follow Lady Blanche, and found that Leonora was coming too. Leonora was speaking to him; he hardly knew what he answered.

And then he found himself seated in a low chair beneath the spreading shade, listening and responding while the talk flowed musically on, and all he did and said seemed right.

Leonora's pets gathered round her, and were severally introduced and required to make friends. Lionel thought he had never seen a prettier sight than Leonora with her great collie's head upon her lap, and her doves alighting by turns upon their mistress's hand.

'She must show you her dovecot,' said Lady Blanche, who had perhaps her own thoughts. 'These are only a few outside pensioners; Leonora's dovecot is always too full, though it can hold—let me see, my dear, how many can it hold?'

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Leonora however could not tell; she had long lost count; but would be very willing to lead the way thither presently.

Everything was to be done 'presently.'

Would he care to fish in the lake some evening? Evening was the best time, and Lady Blanche understood he was free after —what o'clock did he say?

He said, unblushingly, an hour sooner than he would have stated to any other inquirer.

The croquet question was then raised. Lionel, gravely, was very fond of croquet. He had not—ah—played much (only under dire compulsion had he ever taken a hand); but their little ground at The Nook was so rough and badly kept; 'but I'll have it seen to now,' he averred briskly; 'you see, we have only had to play among ourselves, or with people we don't much care for. My sisters have been obliged to—to——'

'I understand,' said Lady Blanche, kindly.

'And we are so near the high road that the passers-by sometimes look over the wall,' continued Lionel, who had stopped a game on this account a few evenings before. He had come home a little out of sorts, and the sight of three or four rude-looking fellows watching his sisters, and passing remarks on their play, had not tended to soothe his feelings.

The girls themselves, it appeared, had been aware of their 'gallery' without resenting it.

'They did us no harm,' said Bet; 'and though you say they were talking about us, we heard nothing.'

'Except once,' amended Georgie, with elation; 'once, when I hit the stick from right away at the other end of the ground. They could not help cheering. I heard them; I would have cheered myself. It was a fluke, of course; but they appreciated it all the same.'

'Bet, do you think it a proper thing that young ladies should be watched and applauded by a set of common workmen?'

Bet however had indignantly repudiated any responsibility in the matter. She could not help the men being there, and she did not suppose Lionel would have wished her to order them away. They would only have been impudent if she had.

Could they not play somewhere else?

Where else could they play?

At least, they could be quiet over it; not shout, and attract notice.

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A good deal of give-and-take irritation had been expended on the subject.

So that even before coming to Henham, Lionel, half ashamed of his strictures, as well as realising their futility, had almost decided on a step which would settle the difficulty—namely, that of raising the wall which, by its lowness, permitted too much publicity; and he could now assure himself that he was about to have this done forthwith.

'I suppose you *are* rather near the road,' said Lady Blanche; 'but really one would never gness it, once within your pretty grounds. And you have always the woods at the back for an outlet.'

He admitted the woods.

'About the croquet, I see the force of your objection,' continued the speaker. 'In my day young ladies never played games in public as they do now; but I hear of my nieces and their friends competing at lawn-tennis and golf with all the world looking on. Our archery meetings, and we had plenty of them, took place at each other's houses, and very much we enjoyed ourselves, though perhaps we did not play quite so professionally as they do nowadays.'

'I am afraid, auntie, you would be nowhere if you played tennis now;' Leonora shook her head gaily.

'My dear, I never played tennis. It only came in after I had been some years married. Archery was all the rage up to that time, and I won a silver medal the day I was engaged——' she broke off short. To be talking to Lionel Colvin's son of the day she was engaged! She passed her hand before her eyes.

'It must have been grand to win a silver medal,' said Leonora, perceiving nothing, 'and I dare say archery suited you better than lawn-tennis. I can't fancy you skipping about behind a net, but I can see you quite Diana-like before a target.'

'An absolutely perfect Diana,' thought Lionel; but, despite a flash of reminiscence, his eye was more occupied watching the caressing hand that moved among Ghillie's black and yellow curls, than with his elder companion's jewelled fingers pressing down, as it were, scenes that started to life beneath an unfortunate turn of speech. He had barely noticed the brief halt and sigh ere Lady Blanche was herself again.

'We do not keep a lawn-tennis ground here, as Leonora does not care for it; but we play bowls in the summer evenings.'

'Oh, do you?' The one outdoor game which Lionel really

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cared for was the old-fashioned one of bowls, and he often put up with queer fellow-players when it was in question. One house in particular he would go to, despite Bet. There was no need for *them* to be friendly, he said; and quite allowed that the Greenlaws were noisy and vulgar, but he could not forswear their bowling alley. He knew its ways to a nicety, and there was a pair of bowls which were already looked upon as his, whose bias he could calculate upon to a hair's breadth.

His eyes glistened as Lady Blanche spoke. 'My brothers are so fond of bowls, they ask for the bag directly they come; and at Downing they play regularly. Leonora and I are poor performers, but we are never let off;' and aunt and niece smiled at each other.

Lionel saw himself throwing the 'Jack' hither and thither over soft green turf, always not too far, always within range for —Leonora.

At last he had to go. The long, long afternoon was drowsily merging itself into evening, and he had been told at the outset that the ladies attended evening service on Sundays. A stable clock, the same which had earlier greeted his approach, now aided his departure, since he could rise surprised and apologetic, as it again clanged its ponderous notes, and Lady Blanche, rising also, shared the surprise and made apology on her own part.

'It was hardly fair of us to keep you so long from your sisters on your one day at home, but there was so much to be said,' cried she, pleasantly. 'And when you get into the way of coming, as I hope you will—I hope very much indeed you will'—earnestly—'please remember that we are always here, and that you, and any of you, will be always welcome. Bring a sister, or sisters, when you please; come alone when you please. You will find us under these trees in summer, by the drawing-room fire in winter. Am I asking too much if I beg you not to look upon us as mere acquaintances, but as friends from this day forward? For the sake of your father, you know;' she added in a lowered voice, accompanied by a glance at once tender and significant.

'Lady Blanche'—the young man gathered himself up, and returned the glance with one of deep respect—'you could not ask me anything I should more truly, more gratefully consider as a privilege. Oh, you don't know what it will be to us,' dropping all at once the somewhat old-fashioned demeanour and formal tone for one more animated and spontaneous. 'All our lives have

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been spent among strangers, and my poor sisters——' but he had already been very frank about his sisters.

'Why, of course, they want an old body to throw a wing over them,' said Lady Blanche, holding his hand with, had she known it, something of her mother's compelling charm, that charm which had lulled to rest her own and many another's misgivings. The daughter had inherited the softness, the sweetness; but what had in the one been a delusive mockery was in the other a reality.

Before the young man took his departure, an early date was fixed upon for the next meeting.

'Just show him out by the shrubbery gate, my dear'—Lady Blanche pointed to a pathway and looked towards her niece—'and though I am afraid you cannot take the short cut through the park to-day,' again turning to her guest, 'for you would find that gate locked, you can have a key in future. Leonora, remind me.'

'And then I can come as far and meet your sisters,' said Leonora, as she obeyed. 'I can always go anywhere in the park. It will be such fun. We will fix the hour, and there I shall be looking out for them. If they are late, or I am late, we shall abuse each other. Are they punctual girls?'

He was obliged to confess that he did not know.

'I'll soon find out,' quoth she, confidently.

And it was then he noticed what a light, springing step she had, and how every motion reminded him of one of her own deer, whom she pointed out browsing on the sunny western slope.

'They are always there about this time in the afternoon,' said she.

But she only went with him a very little way; the shrubbery gate was all too soon in sight; and as for lingering or seeking to detain her? Lionel literally hurried his adieux.

'He has some other visits to pay,' thought she, with a shade of disappointment; she could have waited a minute.

But she did not see how his quick step slackened directly he was out of sight.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

'HANG—DASH—CONFOUND!'

THE sound of merry laughter may fall pleasantly upon the ear, or again it may bear an unfortunate if Scriptural resemblance to the crackling of thorns.

Lionel Colvin had fallen in love at first sight with Leonora Massitur. Her voice was sweet and low, her mirth a strain of purest music—oh, we know all about it, young man, and there is no need to tell us that other people's fun is poor fun, or that they themselves are dull, tiresome, commonplace, making only a farce of being sprightly and amusing.

Down from an exalted region falls poor Lionel plump; and alights at his own garden gate, to be there assailed by what he mentally terms vulgar, noisy peals of merriment. Can it be wondered at that he frowns as he glances within before entering?

Yet an ordinary spectator would find nothing to vex either eye or ear in the appearance of the little party encamped beneath the shade, a party similar in all respects to that Lionel has so lately quitted, and which pleased him so well. Here is just such another cheerful group of talkers and laughers—three pretty girls encircling one contented man—William Farrell, in short, with Bet, Poll, and Georgie in happy attendance, all as serenely satisfied with themselves and each other, as independent of extraneous society, as had been the fair ladies and their companion at Henham Park.

William had called two hours before, taking everybody by surprise, for he had been supposed to be far enough away. It was nearly a week since anything had been seen of him, and during that week Massitur feelings had prevailed primarily with Poll and Georgie, while even Bet, of tougher fibre, had accorded to the new topic more interest than she would have taken in anything else.

Had there been no Billy it would have been even more to her than to her sisters.

A few words and looks undid all. She now chiefly cared for Lionel's having gone to Henham because it was something to tell the visitor, and because, if truth must out, her brother's absence was welcome. When he was there she experienced a restraint and an odd inexplicable anxiety from which at other times she

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was free. There was a sense of some one's looking on with cool, dispassionate observation, and hearkening to all that was said, not unkindly perhaps, but still from another standpoint than that of the sisters.

'He is our own Billy, and we all adore him,' Georgie once pronounced; whereat Bet laughed at her, but the laugh hid another feeling.

'Our own Billy'? Yes, that did very well. There could be nothing more with one than with another when 'Our own Billy' summed up the situation. All felt alike, Poll and Georgie and she. Bet usually sat a little behind the others when the circle was formed, and spoke less—less even than Poll—but to be sure it is only fair that younger sisters should come to the front in due course, and Bet had her answer ready when taxed for silence on a special occasion.

'You always tell me I suppress you two. It appears you like being suppressed, then?'

'Is that it?' quoth unsuspecting Georgie.

She had been afraid of a lecture, and taken the initiative; but since Bet was not going to be 'down' upon either herself or Poll for forwardness—a time-honoured grievance—all was right. It was highly agreeable to find now that she might run on as fast as she chose when Billy was present, and that the graver demeanour of her eldest sister did not mean sulks.

'I have to be a little more careful than a child like you,' said Bet, importantly.

'Besides, Mrs. Tom did give him first to me, Bet.'

'Yes, she did.'

'Oh, you own that at last, do you? Is that why you generally let me have the most of him?'

But Bet knows that there are two ways of having the most of a man. William Farrell talks and laughs and chaffs merrily with wild, mischievous, ready-witted Georgie, who is never at a loss for an answer, shines in a passage-of-arms, and sets against her lack of knowledge and cultivation an amount of natural, shrewd ability which often surprises those who know her best.

As a fact, Georgie is what our transatlantic cousins call the smartest of the three. Bet has an infinitely deeper and stronger nature; she thinks, reflects, meditates; but her mind is a slow worker, and, until lately, to intellectual acquirement she has been indifferent. In consequence, she is often content to let others cut in before her when the conversation is general and animated,

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but let it not be supposed that my heroine means to be overlooked for all that.

Already, this very afternoon, she has had more than one moment to add to her store of such treasures, and now sits by while the gay chatter runs on with an illumined countenance, an abandonment to peaceful bliss that all at once reveals to Lionel the truth. Instinctively he recognises the look and marks the stricken deer of the herd.

A month, a day ago, and this would have pleased our careful elder brother well enough; now, he tells himself angrily that the Farrells are moneyed, consequential nobodies, with whom he shudders to think of forming a connection. Good Heavens! what has he been about, what have they all been about to let themselves drift into intimacy, still worse into possible matrimony with people so far beneath them? Bet, too; Bet, the eldest and prettiest (Bet had always been the one for him)—Bet, of whom Lady Blanche had spoken so enthusiastically and significantly—he grinds his teeth as his eye takes in her beatified air, and a muttered oath escapes, which is not entirely due to present vexation and disappointment.

Doubtless however these had their share in the gloom which enveloped the young man's heart as he forced himself to approach the group and greet the visitor; since any scene of the kind, with any central figure for its object, would have been distasteful at the moment.

He had been hoping for solitude, counting upon it, secure that as the evening, though warm, was not sultry, and there were no suspicious thunder clouds about, Poll's frequent plea of headache would not be admitted, and she would be marched off to evening service under Bet's disciplinarian wing, together with Georgie, who was never allowed the excuse occasionally accorded her sister.

On first coming to The Nook, both the younger girls had rebelled against this second church-going, but it had availed them nothing.

'What does it matter whether we went before or not? We are going now,' was all Bet deigned to reply.

'But you don't make Lionel go?' tried Poll.

'Men are different. We have got to be more religious,' rejoined Bet, loftily.

Lionel had overheard and smiled to himself. And he had smiled afresh as he thought of poor Bet's arbitrary religion, on

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his way home from Henham Park. It would serve him in good stead on this divine evening. He took his watch out and noted the hour with satisfaction as he neared the house. Certainly, yes, certainly she would have swept off the other two and left the coast clear for him; and he would wander up and down in the dusky solitude with his pipe, his blessed pipe, for sole companion and confidant, thinking and dreaming, seeing Leonora and hearing Leonora—oh, hang it all!

For it was at this point in the programme that the burst of merry laughter from the other side of the garden wall crackled so ominously in his ears.

He was at the gate, and shook it open roughly. None of them gone, not one! And a fourth figure looming through the twilight!

'Hang—dash—confound!' He has almost to throttle himself lest they hear him. He stamps clandestinely, hid by the gate.

And it is of this quiet, modest, gentle-mannered youth that Lady Blanche is thinking at the moment. Despite herself she cannot keep her thoughts from wandering, and she has heard her old vicar's sermon so many times before, that even a less engrossing subject might have excused her; she is thinking, we say, of Lionel, her new, delightful Lionel; of what a *dear* face it is, so full of thoughtful earnestness and soul and strength. Back to the far-away days his voice has taken her, the very turn of his head, the bend of his neck, his attitudes, his movements—she credits him with a resemblance all through, and worships accordingly. For all her middle-aged widowhood there are tons of girlish enthusiasm lurking still within that stately breast, and her ladyship, the most frigid figure in the congregation, is simply effervescing with plots and plans that send a bright pink colour into either cheek.

'Aunt Blanche looks lovely to-night!' thinks Leonora, with a curious, pleased perception of what has caused the loveliness.

She too is thinking of Lionel, wondering if he is thinking of her?—what he will say of her?—if he will speak of her to his sisters?—if they are likely to repeat—oh, she has a host of things to consider and busy her mind with, all centring in this grave, gentle, reticent new acquaintance.

'Hang—dash—confound!' Lionel flings the gate to, and sullenly stalks across the lawn. 'How d'ye do?' gruffly to Billy, who on his part nods upward, making no feint of rising from his chair. 'You haven't gone to church, then?' continues

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our young man, addressing his sisters in tones that unmistakably demand 'Why not, pray?'

For a wonder it is Poll who replies. Poll generally lets the replying be done for her, but Bet, to whom Lionel has pointedly addressed himself, is picking up a book which has fallen at her side, and as Georgie also is occupied, or affects to be so, Poll has an opportunity.

'It has been such avery hot day, Lionel. And you know what church is on a night like this. We really felt we could not face it.'

'Bet let us off,' dashed in Georgie. 'There, that's the truth; we never want to go, Poll and I; but Bet makes us. To-night she said we needn't.'

'I am afraid your brother thinks I kept you,' said William Farrell's courteous voice, 'and indeed I am not sure that I did not; but'—turning to him—'I assure you I meant it all right. Your sisters would have found it unendurable inside a crowded, gas-reeking church—I know what we all suffered last Sunday evening!' He had been present, and meant Lionel to know it.

'So you needn't come home looking such daggers at us,' cried the saucy Georgie, recovering; '*you* have had a jolly afternoon; why shouldn't *we*?' and she glanced triumphantly round.

'Yes. Please be kind to us,' said Billy, meekly. ('You young ass!' he muttered to himself.)

Hitherto he had got on well enough with a brother whom he only met at rare intervals, and to whom he was studiously polite, but he read a new look in Lionel's eye. 'Oh, very well'—he shrugged his shoulders mentally.

The situation lasted a full minute; then Lionel turned to go indoors.

He had fancied that questionings and eagerness about Henham and its occupants would be distasteful, and had been ready with vague replies, while yet admitting to himself that something must be conceded to natural curiosity and interest. It would be shabby to snub the girls and tell them nothing. He would dilate upon the picture incident at any rate, and recount what Lady Blanche said and did, how she looked, and what she wore.

Then he could enter upon the croquet question, and make much of future prospects and the one actual, positive invitation—and all of this he had arranged to do in due time; but now the wind was completely taken out of his sails, and he found himself resenting the very absence of that cross-examination

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which had been dreaded and prepared for. 'If they don't care to hear, they needn't hear,' he muttered vengefully.

This however was too much.

'Lionel—stop!' It was Georgie who bounded from her place; she had been lying on a rug spread over the grass. 'Lionel,' she cried shrilly, running after him, 'come back. Oh, Lin, how can you be so?—and you know we are dying to hear,' plucking him by the elbow.

'Nonsense, dying!' He strode on.

'But we are,' persisted she, holding fast. 'Do come back. Don't be cross and disagreeable—before Mr. Farrell too!' in a lower tone. 'He'll think it's because he is here.'

'What is he doing here?'

'What you were doing there,' airily. 'Making a Sunday call; and we made him stay on to hear the accounts. We told him where you were gone.'

'What on earth did you do that for? Bragging!'

'It wasn't bragging. How could it be bragging? He asked, and Bet said it as naturally as possible. And we had to tell about the Massiturs coming here, because of course he knows—they all know——'

'They only know what we choose to tell them. And now it will seem as if we were so elated.' They were out of earshot, and the argument was pursued *in camerâ*.

'Is your brother often taken like this?' said Billy, addressing himself urbanely to the two left behind, 'or is it the weather? I felt cross myself this morning, but now a child could knock me down with a feather. Miss Bet, I don't want to go, but if I am in the way——?'

'In the way?' It is Poll who protests most vigorously. Bet's eyes glow in the gathering dusk, and she only looks at him and softly shakes her head.

Billy leans towards her, addresses her, presently talks to her alone. Poll, sitting by, sometimes loses the half of what is said. She cannot get any nearer, for she is sitting on the garden seat, and her sister's chair is a little way off, and Billy, who was between them, has edged his close to it; so that when his head is turned—and it is kept persistently turned—no third person three yards away has a chance.

Once or twice when Poll herself speaks, her remark passes unnoticed. Poor Pollkins feels the evening air grow chilly, and wonders why Georgie ran off and never came back?—thinking

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ruefully how much pleasanter it was when they were all talking together, before Lionel came home to break up the party.

She has no desire to engross the visitor, as Bet is doing; she only wants her fair share of attention, and that the conversation should be nice and general. She does think it is not quite fair of Bet to—oh, he is going!

'Shall we let you know?' says Bet, in what her sister feels assured is a new voice, a company voice, not the voice of the past half-hour. They have all risen, and still William Farrell's back is turned and Pollkins feels out in the cold.

Bet however is looking towards her and explaining something, so Poll may as well listen; and as she listens the ruffled feathers of our little brown bird are smoothed.

'Poll, did you hear? Mr. Farrell is so kind as to invite us all to dine with him at the White Farm? I am sure we should like it very much' (not in Bet's natural voice by any means). 'Should we not, Poll? We are to let Mr. Farrell know which day will suit, because of course Lionel must fix that.'

'So I have been suggesting that you wait for a good opportunity to ask him about it,' appended Billy, with smiling significance. 'Not to-night; something has put him out to-night. Sad to say, we wretched men do get put out at times, and the charming women who belong to us have to suffer for it. But it will pass off and the benign mood return. Brothers with such sisters cannot but be generally benign. Then——' and as he laughed the admiring audience laughed also.

'Was *that* what he was talking about?' put forth Poll thereafter. 'But he might have said it so that I could hear. I could not hear a word. Just hum—hum—hum; and you spoke as low as he; as if you were a couple of conspirators.' She was quite reassured, and continued briskly: 'Let's make Georgie guess our secret. She is simply aching to get inside the White Farm. The Massiturs put her off it for a little; and so they did me. And you too, I suppose? But now, Billy for ever! We'll walk up that old lane straight to the front door this time. No sneaking beneath the bridge. And we'll inspect the table, and the chair, and the window curtains. Next time we look from the fields it will all appear different; we shall know what the room is like inside.' And she prattled on.

Once or twice during the remainder of the evening she looked at Bet, her look conveying: 'Has the time come? Has the benign mood arrived which we are to take advantage of?'

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Bet however remained obstinately silent.

She could distinguish between a penitent Lionel, somewhat annoyed with himself and anxious to wipe out the remembrance of an ugly scene by a little extra display of sociability and loquacity, and a Lionel whose feelings had undergone an actual change with regard to the point at issue.

As long as Henham was the theme the former's tongue was unloosed, and even beneath a raking fire of interrogation and conjecture he remained mild and placable; but he made no allusion to William Farrell, and let pass any that dropped from the lips of others.

At last: 'You *were* rude to him, Lionel,' said Poll obtusely; for she had not the wit to see that her sisters were carefully restraining themselves, Georgie having had it out with her brother, and Bet not daring to spring what might prove to be a mine. 'I never saw you so rude to anyone,' she was continuing, when a rasping voice interposed: 'It is not for *you* to teach Lionel how to behave,' quoth Bet, and Georgie at the words turned and looked at the speaker.

Lionel's brow, which had begun to gloom, cleared again. Bet's championship was inexpressibly welcome and hopeful; surprising, too; not at all what he had anticipated. Was he wrong then? Surely, unless he were, she would never have evinced such spirit, such quick resentment of Poll's accusation. He must be wrong.

In regard to Pollkins, she might say what she chose, and he even laughed as he retorted jocularly, 'I was rude, was I? So Georgie told me; but it does rile a fellow to come in and find a lot of people gaping and staring and looking so jolly comfortable and at home, when you are hot and tired and want to be quiet. Bill Farrell is well enough; it was not him I found fault with, but with his being here. He might have had the sense to go before I came home.'

'Don't you think it would have been he who was rude in that case?' said Bet, quietly.

'You mean to me?'

'Yes, to you. The head of the house.'

'But it is you girls he comes to see.'

'He may come to see us and yet pay you proper respect. Had you come home earlier, I dare say he would have gone earlier; as it was, he could only have——'

'Meant to be civil, eh?' said he, as she paused.

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'I think he wished to stay; and to wait till you came in was a very proper and natural pretext,' said Bet, steadily. 'We asked him to stay. Even if he had not wished to do so he could hardly have refused.'

'Oh!'

'So now for the invitation;' Poll sat forward in her chair and fixed her eye on Bet, while Georgie equally expectant—she had heard the news in the meantime—forbore to forestall her sister. Lionel had given them all a fright, and no risks must be run.

He now sat placidly smoking, and could a better opportunity occur?

'Why don't you do it?' Georgie slipped off her seat on the window-sill and approached her sister's ear; Poll, feeling herself a born diplomatist, called off Lionel's attention from the two as she perceived this.

'Let me, then,' urged Georgie, as though something had been said. But nothing had.

Bet was writhing impotently. Oh, if they would let her alone, not force her to speak of him, of it, of anything that might reawaken that lulled suspicion on her brother's part! She knew that suspicion was but lulled; was ready to spring up again at any moment; and that if she could not command easy unconcern—— 'Shall I?' persisted Georgie. In desperation a sign of assent was made and taken advantage of on the instant.

And as it is only in books that people see each other changing colour and starting and trembling, for in real life these signs of perturbation are rarely visible, or if visible are as often as not misunderstood, no one was the least the wiser for all the poor girl went through during the next quarter of an hour.

First of all Lionel was indifferent, absolutely unconscious that an event of the first magnitude had taken place.

Then he was torpidly unpropitious. Could they not get out of it? It would be an awful bore. What could have put such a thing into the man's head?

Suddenly he blazed up. It was downright confounded impertinence; just the sort of thing one might expect from people like the Farrells.

Side by side Poll and Georgie fought the battle, perhaps the first battle they had ever fought in the interests of all three without Bet for a leader, and staunch little warriors that they were, they neither then nor thereafter reviled the coward for her defalcation.

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'I did feel mean,' said she, afterwards; 'but you did far better without me than with me'—this was when the field was won. 'I get so very angry,' pleaded Bet, 'and I can't take things as either of you can. If I had allowed myself to speak when Lionel said Mr. Farrell was—was——'

'Pooh! I didn't care a pop what he said Billy was. Billy can hold his own. I'd like to see a tussle between him and Lionel. I think I know who would win. The only way is to laugh.'

'But I can't laugh.'

'What do you mean? Can't laugh!'

'I can't laugh when people I like are maligned. It is not only that I feel hot and cold and furious, but if I were to laugh I should be treacherous as well. Georgie, don't think me unkind, but once or twice when you led Lionel on, and laughed with him, telling him how we once——'

'I did not tell him about the mock Billy; I did not tell him that.'

'You told him that we made up nicknames and mimicked him.'

'What if I did? It was only to show how differently we feel now; and I can tell you nothing made more impression upon Lionel than those very things you blame me for. He roared at the idea of our all being trotted out by Mrs. Tom in turn, and from that minute he began to waver. You saw he did. He was quite nice about Billy directly I said he was our own Billy, and that not one of us was fonder of him than the others. When it came to that, he agreed to the dinner straight away.'

And she had said it in good faith, little thinking, little dreaming!

Bet drew a sudden quick sigh, then smiled upon her sister, drew her within her arm, and twined around her fingers the clustering tendrils on the smooth young brow as if it were a child's, as if the child were her own child—her little Georgie of long ago.

Georgie nestled contentedly. 'We have had a nice day, haven't we, Bet?'

'Yes, dear.'

'A little breezy towards the close; the wind got up at sunset,' laughing softly; 'but a good blow does no one any harm, and clears the air. Lionel is all right now; and I don't think Billy really minded, do you?'

'He spoke most kindly of Lionel.'

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'When Lin and I were away, having it out? Poll told me you and Billy had a sort of confidential business. Pollkins was inclined to be jealous.'

'People can talk more freely when—when——'

'Two's company, three's none, of course. And Poll and I had had our innings; it was only fair that you should have yours. Lionel had had his, too—at Henham,' proceeded the speaker in a satisfied tone. 'He needn't have been cross with us; however we won't hark back. And we have two invitations—two delightful invitations for one week. Think of it! It makes one giddy, such a whirl. They will be so different,' continued she, after a pause of pleasurable anticipation. 'Of course, going to the farm will be fun—dining there, too! But dining at Henham, Bet—think of that! How glorious we shall feel, setting out at four o'clock and telling Simmins we shan't be home tell eleven, and are to be sent for then. Solon must be brought in for good now, Lionel says, as we shall want him whenever we go to Henham—at least, whenever we stay on at Henham. I do love to "stay on" at a house; don't you? Lionel says it was Lady Blanche's idea that we should walk there and drive back. He seemed to think it so polite and respectful—those were his words—not to offer her own carriages and horses as if we were poor people and had to be fetched and carried, but to treat poor old Solon as if he were quite a dignified and creditable animal—though I dare say her swell grooms will sniff at him. And oh, Bet, he does want clipping.'

'Lionel is going to see to that,' said Bet.

'He'll see to anything with Henham in the question,' responded Georgie, shrewdly. 'Do you know what he is doing now? Looking at the garden wall to see how it can be raised. I saw him go down the walk as we came upstairs, and he is not come in yet. Well, he has got his wish at last; he has always been hankering after some real people for us to make friends with; and if he will only fall in love with Leonora——'

'Georgie, dear, don't be foolish. We are all a little upset by this good fortune—it *is* good fortune, and I don't deny it—that our dear father's old love-story should have brought us such kind friends and a pleasant house to go to.'

'You yourself said to Lady Blanche that she could not think how much it would be to us.'

'So I did; and I do think it will be a great deal; but I want us all to understand,' said Bet, firmly, 'that however good and kind

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the Massiturs may be, there *are* other people, and we are not going to throw off everyone else because of them. We could not be so ungrateful, so horrible.'

'Why, of course not. What are you thinking of? Whom should we throw off? Billy?'

'All the Farrells. All our former friends. You can see that Lionel is already inclined to drop them——'

'He never was anything else, you know. It was we who said we must have some sort of society.'

'And having said it, we'll stick to it. And having been glad enough to go to Beech Hall and Hay Farm and Westlands——'

'Oh, not Westlands. I never could abide that Emma.'

'Mr. Farrell says she is a dear little woman, so bright and amusing.'

'She may be to him; precious little brightness and amusingness comes our way.'

'If Lionel were to have his head turned by Leonora Massitur,' said Bet, resolutely returning to the point,' anyone could see what would be the end of it. He would be drawn away, and would try to draw us away from everyone who is not on a level with the Massiturs; he would estrange others who might have cared for us, and with whom we might have been happy; he would affront the whole neighbourhood in so far as we are concerned. I read all this in his manner towards our visitor this evening; and, at the last, he would find—oh, Georgie, I cannot bear to say it, or to think it—but I *know* it would be so, if he should be so blind, so rash as to follow this will o' the wisp, he would find himself one day shut out in the dark with a bunch of withered flowers—the rose he wore to-day——'

'Bet! dear Bet!'

'He is so like dear father,' sobbed Bet. 'Lady Blanche broke *his* heart—oh, I mean no harm of her; she was very young, and her mother, her own mother, told her lies, and she believed them. But why did father look so high? Could he not have been content with——?'

'Bet, our father!'

'I know,' said Bet, admitting the reproach; 'I ought not to say it, but I often feel it. She was too far above him; he might have known the world better. Lionel must not make the same mistake; I say he *must* not'—passionately.

'All right, he shan't;' Georgie stroked her sister's wet hand, and laid her cheek upon it. 'He shan't, never you fear. I'll put

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him off. I'll say such things of Leonora—let me see—I'll begin by laughing at her hair, I'll call it a tow wig; then I'll say she has a putty face whose pink has run in the wash—because, you know, she is pale, and the heat made her streaky that day—very likely she will be streaky again; then those long fingers of hers, I'll call them claws——'

'Georgie, are you in earnest?'

'What am I to do, then? He knows I admire her now. If I don't turn round and attack her at every single point, it will be too late.'

'I don't know that there is anything we can do,' said Bet, mournfully; 'and certainly if you want to urge Lionel on, you could not set about it in a better way than by running down the girl you are afraid of. It would be too palpably absurd. All I wanted to say was that while we are glad to go to Henham——'

'Glad! We would crawl there on all fours, and wriggle in through the water-pipes.'

'——we are not going to be carried away by it. We are not going to indulge in wild, extravagant dreams about it. We are not going to encourage Lionel——'

'Faith, he needs no encouraging.'

'Come to bed.' Suddenly Bet hopped down from her high horse, and shook off her satellite. 'I hope, miss, your speech and manners will benefit, whatever else does not, by intercourse with your superiors. How would you have liked Leonora Massitur to hear you say "Faith"?'

'She'd sooner have heard that than some of the rest,' retorted Georgie, coolly. 'Tow wig, eh?'

'Come to bed this instant,' said Bet, peremptorily.

(To be continued.)

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At the Gate.

THE monastery towers, as pure and fair
As virgin vows, reached up white hands to Heaven;
The walls, to guard the hidden heart of prayer,
Were strong as sin, and white as sin forgiven;
And there came holy men, by world's woe driven;
And all about the gold-green meadows lay
Flower-decked, like children dear that keep May-holiday.

'Here,' said the Abbot, 'let us spend our days,
Days sweetened by the lilies of pure prayer,
Hung with white garlands of the rose of praise;
And, lest the World should enter with her snare—
Enter and laugh, and take us unaware
With her red rose, her purple and her gold—
Choose we a stranger's hand the porter's keys to hold.'

They chose a beggar from the world outside
To keep their worldward door for them, and he,
Filled with a humble and adoring pride,
Built up a wall of proud humility
Between the monastery's sanctity
And the poor, foolish, humble folk who came
To ask for love and care, in the dear Saviour's name.

For when the poor crept to the guarded gate
To ask for succour, when the tired asked rest,
When weary souls, bereft and desolate,
Craved comfort, when the murmur of the oppressed
Surged round the grove where Prayer had made her nest,
The porter bade such take their griefs away,
And at some other door their bane and burden lay.

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'For this,' he said, 'is the white house of prayer,
  Where day and night the holy voices rise
Through the chill trouble of our earthly air,
  And enter at the gate of Paradise.
  Trample no more our flower-fields in such wise,
Nor crave the alms of our deep-laden bough;
The prayers of holy men are alms enough, I trow.'

So, seeing that no sick or sorrowing folk
  Came ever to be healed or comforted,
The Abbot to his brothers gladly spoke:
  'God has accepted our poor prayers,' he said;
  'Over our land His answering smile is spread.
He has put forth His strong and loving hand,
And sorrow and sin and pain have ceased in all the land.

'So make we yet more rich our hymns of praise,
  Warm we our prayers against our happy heart.
Since God hath taken the gift of all our days
  To make a spell that bids all wrong depart,
  Has turned our praise to balm for the world's smart,
Fulfilled of prayer and praise be every hour,
For God transfigures praise, and transmutes prayer, to power.'

So went the years. The flowers blossomed now
  Untrampled by the dusty, weary feet;
Unbroken hung the green and golden bough,
  For none came now to ask for fruit or meat,
  For ghostly food, or common bread to eat;
And dreaming, praying, the monks were satisfied,
Till, God remembering him, the beggar-porter died.

When they had covered up the foolish head,
  And on the blind and loving heart heaped clay,
'Which of us, brothers, now,' the Abbot said,
  'Will face the world, to keep the world away?'
  But all their hearts were hard with prayer, and 'Nay,'
They cried, 'ah, bid us not our prayers to leave;
Ah, father, not to-day, for this is Easter Eve.'

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And, while they murmured, to their midst there came
  A beggar, saying, 'Brothers, peace, be still!
I am your Brother, in our Father's name,
  And I will be your porter, if ye will,
  Guarding your gate with what I have of skill.'
So all they welcomed him and closed the door,
And gat them gladly back unto their prayers once more.

But, lo! no sooner did the prayer arise,
  A golden flame athwart the chancel dim,
Than came the porter crying, 'Haste, arise!
  A sick old man waits you to tend on him;
  And many wait—a knight whose wound gapes grim,
A red-stained man, with red sins to confess,
A mother pale, who brings her child for you to bless.'

The brothers hastened to the gate, and there
  With unaccustomed hand and voice they tried
To ease the body's pain, the spirit's care;
  But, ere the task was done, the porter cried:
  'Behold, the Lord sets your gate open wide,
In here be starving folk who must be fed,
And little ones that cry for love and daily bread!'

And, with each slow-foot hour, came ever a throng
  Of piteous wanderers, sinful folk and sad,
And still the brothers ministered, but long
  The day seemed, with no prayer to make them glad;
  No holy, meditative joys they had,
No moment's brooding-place could poor prayer find,
And all those hearts to heal and all those wounds to bind.

And when the crowded, sunlit day at last
  Left the field lonely with its trampled flowers,
Into the chapel's peace the brothers passed
  To quell the memory of those hurrying hours.
  'Our holy time,' they said, 'once more is ours!
Come, let us pay our debt of prayer and praise,
Forgetting in God's light the darkness of man's ways!'

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But, ere their voices reached the first psalm's end,
  They heard a new, strange, rustling round their house;
Then came the porter: 'Here comes many a friend,
  Pushing aside your budding orchard boughs;
  Come, brothers, justify your holy vows.
Here be God's patient, poor, four-footed things
Seek healing at God's well, whence loving-kindness springs.'

Then cried the Abbot in a vexed amaze,
  'Our brethren we must aid, if 'tis God's will;
But the wild creatures of the forest ways
  Himself God heals with His Almighty skill.
  And charity is good, and love—but still
God shall not look in vain for the white prayers
We send on silver feet to climb the starry stairs;

'For, of all worthy things, prayer has most worth,
  It rises like sweet incense up to Heaven,
And from God's hand falls back upon the earth,
  Being of heavenly bread the accepted leaven.
  Through prayer is virtue saved and sin forgiven;
In prayer the impulse and the force are found
That bring in purple and gold the fruitful seasons round.

'For prayer comes down from Heaven in the sun
  That giveth life and joy to all things made;
Prayer falls in rain to make broad rivers run
  And quicken the seeds in earth's brown bosom laid;
  By prayer the red-hung branch is earthward weighed,
By prayer the barn grows full, and full the fold,
For by man's prayer God works His wonders manifold.'

The porter bowed his head to the reproof;
  But when the echo of the night's last prayer
Died in the mystery of the vaulted roof,
  A whispered memory in the hallowed air,
  The Abbot turned to find, still standing there,
The porter, and his face was still bowed down
As when it humbly bent before the Abbot's frown.

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'Brother,' the porter spoke, 'I crave your leave
  To leave you—for to-night I journey far.
But I have kept your gate this Easter Eve,
  And now your house to Heaven shines like a star
  To show the Angels where God's children are;
And in this day your house has served God more
Than in the praise and prayer of all its days before.

'Yet I must leave you, though I fain would stay,
  For there are other gates I go to keep
Of houses round whose walls, long day by day,
  Shut out of hope and love, poor sinners weep—
  Barred folds that keep out God's poor wandering sheep—
I must teach these that gates where God comes in
Must not be shut at all to pain, or want, or sin.

'The voice of prayer is very soft and weak,
  And sorrow and sin have voices very strong;
Prayer is not heard in Heaven when those twain speak,
  The voice of prayer faints in the voice of wrong
  By the just man endured—oh, Lord, how long?—
If ye would have your prayers in Heaven be heard,
Look that wrong clamour not with too intense a word.

'But when true love is shed on want and sin,
  Their cry is changed, and grows to such a voice
As clamours sweetly at Heaven to be let in—
  Such sound as makes the saints in Heaven rejoice;
  Pure gold of prayer, purged of the vain alloys
Of idleness—that is the sound most dear
Of all the earthly sounds God leans from Heaven to hear.

'Oh, brother, I must leave thee, and for me
  The work is heavy, and the burden great.
Thine be this charge I lay upon thee: See
  That never again stands barred thy abbey gate;
  Look that God's poor be not left desolate;
Ah me! that chidden my shepherds needs must be,
When my poor wandering sheep have so great need of me.

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'Brother, forgive thy Brother if he chide,
  Thy Brother loves thee—and has loved—for see
The nails are in my hands, and in my side
  The spear-wound; and the thorns weigh heavily
  Upon my brow—brother, I died for thee—
For thee, and for my sheep that are astray,
And rose to live for thee, and them, on Easter Day!'

'My Master and my Lord!' the Abbot cried.
  But, where that Face had been, shone the new day;
Only on the marble by the Abbot's side,
  Where those dear Feet had stood, a lily lay—
  A lily white for the white Easter Day.
He sought the gate—no sorrow clamoured there—
And, not till then, he dared to sink his soul in prayer.

And from that day himself he kept the gate
  Wide open; and the poor from far and wide,
The weary, and wicked, and disconsolate,
  Came there for succour and were not denied;
  The sick were healed, the repentant sanctified;
And from their hearts rises more prayer and praise
Than ever the abbey knew in all its prayer-filled days.

And there the heavenly vision comes no more,
  Only, each Easter now, a lily sweet
Lies white and dewy on the chancel floor
  Where once had stood the belovèd wounded Feet;
  And the old Abbot feels the nearing beat
Of wings that bring him leave at last to go
And meet his Master, where the immortal lilies grow.

E. NESBIT.

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Johnson's Monument.

IT is rare, but not quite unknown, that from Australia information should come with respect to matters that would seem especially to belong to London. Nearly fifty years ago there was discovered behind an old press in the office of the *Prothonotary*, in Sydney, the diary of a certain Rev. Dr. Thomas Campbell, who had travelled from Ireland to London chiefly to see the 'Great Cham of Literature,' Dr. Johnson. Lord Macaulay [1] showed a keen interest in the discovery, though it must be acknowledged that after all not much new light was thrown on the character of the Dictator of Letters. In the same city, in the library of a collector of all things that concern early Australian history, I recently lighted upon a couple of letters and some memoranda with respect to a controversy that took place more than a century ago, whether the monument to Dr. Johnson should be erected in Westminster Abbey or in 'streaming London's central roar,' in St. Paul's Cathedral. Little is to be gleaned on the subject from books. The question of the decoration of St. Paul's is now once more arousing not a little interest in artistic circles in London; perhaps a small portion of that interest may be spared for the older controversy. A joke of Burke's, made during the discussion, and a disinterested action on the part of Sir Joshua Reynolds are at least deserving of attention.

First, however, a word as to the letters and memoranda finding their way to Sydney. With the exception of a letter from Mr. William Windham, they are in the handwriting of Sir Joseph Banks. A curious fate has befallen Sir Joseph and his memory. Prominent in his lifetime, he has fallen into undeserved oblivion. The first to make a scientific voyage round the world, and for over forty-one years sitting in Newton's chair as President of the Royal Society, he was long the adviser of the English ministry upon all

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, October 1859.

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matters concerned with science or exploration—a very Mæcenas in helping the young or the poor, whether English or foreign, towards scientific research. It might, therefore, have been prophesied that his life and letters would long ago have appeared in two portly volumes octavo. Only accident seems to have hindered this natural result. It was at first intended that the biography should be written by Robert Brown, the eminent botanist, who, appointed by Banks, went to Australia with Flinders, and afterwards lived with Sir Joseph in Soho Square. Sir Joseph Hooker says: 'Age and infirmities interfered with his [Brown's] prosecution of this work.' When Banks died, Brown was exactly forty-seven; so it must have been infirmities rather than age. Brown lived thirty-eight years longer, but had soon shirked the task. Before 1833—that is, within thirteen years of the death of Sir Joseph Banks, the materials had been handed over to Mr. Dawson Turner, F.R.S., the maternal grandfather of Sir Joseph Hooker; but the life remained unwritten. Next an attempt was made to induce Mr. Bell, the Secretary of the Royal Society, to accept the office. In Hooker's preface to the journal of Banks on the *Endeavour* voyage, whence this history of the attempt to produce the biography is drawn, a bibliographic letter from Mr. Carruthers gives a further list of those who were asked to undertake the life—Earl Stanhope (whose grandson is now the Governor of New South Wales, where Banks was so early a visitor), Mr. Colquhoun, Mr. John Ball, Mr. Daydon Jackson. Yet for all the number of the invited, no satisfactory life of Sir Joseph Banks has been written, though, of course, many short sketches exist, as, for instance, that by Lord Brougham in *Statesmen and Men of Science in the Reign of George the Third.* These contain interesting stories, such as whet the appetite for more.

It probably remains for some Australian, who knows what an important part Banks played in the early history of the colony of New South Wales, to revive the memory of the great services of Sir Joseph Banks to the colony, to Great Britain, to science, and to mankind. Unfortunately, through an action of the late Lord Brabourne, many of the materials have been dispersed. Though much is scattered, much abides. In the British Museum, at the Royal Society, in the Record Office, documents exist; in many volumes of reminiscences, in Boswell and in Peter Pindar, here a little and there a little, fragments can be picked up. Meanwhile, collectors in Sydney who appreciate his importance are picking up autographs of Banks. It was in the hands of such a collector,

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a genuine Banks enthusiast, that I found the relics about the Johnson monument.

Boswell tells about the first meeting of the great Doctor with the young adventurer and his friend Solander. It was at dinner at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds; and the next morning Johnson wrote a note to Mr. Banks, sending a motto for the goat which had been twice round the world, and remarking what pleasure he had derived from the conversation. At a little later date Mr. Banks was elected a member of the Club, often called the Literary Club, or, from its founder, Johnson's Club. Here and elsewhere Banks must have enjoyed many opportunities of intercourse with the Doctor. For six years Banks was President of the Royal Society ere his honoured friend died. He acted as a pall-bearer at his funeral.

Dr. Johnson died in December 1784, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. During his last illness, Boswell tells us, 'he asked Sir John Hawkins, one of his executors, where he should be buried, and on being answered, "Doubtless in Westminster Abbey," seemed to feel a satisfaction very natural to a poet, and, indeed, in my opinion, very natural to every man of any imagination, who has no family sepulchre in which he can be laid with his fathers.' 'The Boswell' was evidently himself proud that he possessed such a sepulchre, and did not need to be buried in the Abbey! Proposals for a monument to Johnson's memory were naturally at once set on foot. Malone says they were commenced by the Literary Club, but certainly appeal was soon made to a wider circle.

Of the characteristic fate of one application for a subscription we know from a letter of Horace Walpole.[1] Partly upon general, political and social grounds, and partly because of the treatment of Gray in the *Lives of the Poets*, Walpole could not away with Dr. Johnson. After telling Miss Berry how Boswell tried to obtain information from him about Gray, before Johnson wrote the offending life, Walpole continues:—'After the Doctor's death, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Boswell sent an ambling circular letter to me, begging subscriptions for a monument for him—the two last, I think, impertinently, for they could not but know my opinion, and could not suppose I would contribute to a monument for one who had endeavoured, poor soul! to degrade my friend's superlative poetry. I would not deign to write an answer; but sent down word by my footman, as I would have done to parish

[1] *Walpole's Letters* (Cunningham's edition), vol. ix., p. 319.

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officers with a brief, that I would not subscribe.' The process was evidently different to that of to-day, when the circulars come by post, and obliging waste-paper baskets swallow all those addressed to those who do not mean to give. It is a pity, however, that the form of circular has not survived, that we might form an opinion how a circular would *amble*.

Such matters as collections do not proceed with great rapidity, even when for a monument in honour of a man so distinguished as Dr. Johnson. In his *Life of Goldsmith*, Sir James Prior mentions that amongst Malone's papers submitted to him he found a bundle of letters showing how hard Malone found it to gather in the subscriptions towards the monument that were promised by members of the club, who apparently held the doctrine, *Base is the slave that pays*. If this was the case with the inner circle of Johnsonians, how much more difficult must it have been to raise the funds from the outer!

As far as dates are concerned, the next mention of the monument is in a letter from Boswell to his friend Temple, one of the letters preserved in so strange a way from the degraded fate of wrapping up parcels of small articles purchased in a shop at Boulogne. In November 1789 thus writes Boswell:—'Last Sunday (29th) I dined with him (Malone), with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Joseph Banks, Mr. Metcalfe, Mr. Windham, Mr. Courtenay, and young Mr. Burke, being a select number of Dr. Johnson's friends, to settle as to the effectual measures for having a monument erected to him in Westminster Abbey. It is to be a whole-length statue of him by Bacon, which will cost 600*l*. Sir Joshua and Sir William Scott, his executors, are to send circular letters to a number of people, of whom we make a list, as supposing they will contribute. Several of us subscribed five guineas each; Sir Joshua and Metcalfe ten guineas each; Courtenay and young Burke two guineas each. Will you not be one of us, were it but for one guinea?'

The letter goes on to speak of anarchy in France, where the curtain had risen on the drama of the French Revolution, though it was still 1789, and therefore only in the first act. Sixteen months later appears first mention of the proposal to change the place of the monument from the Abbey to St. Paul's. On March 26, 1791, a meeting of the committee was held at Baxter's. Mr. William Windham, unable to be present, wrote the following letter, which is in the collection in Sydney:—

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'Mar. 26.

'My dear Banks,—Having before blundered and now forgot, I am afraid I must be left out of the consultation, it being hardly possible now, that, unshaved and undressed as I am at present, I should be with you in time. I went last Saturday, having mistaken the day; to-day it quite slipped my memory. I will come as soon as I can; but your consultation will have ended, I hope, long before; and in whatever decision it ends, I shall be very well satisfied. Perhaps I may state in five words all that I should say if I were to be present. The difficulty with respect to the declaration in the advertisements need not, I think, at all stand in the way. Nobody probably advanced his money on the one supposition that would not be equally ready to do on the other. If any such there are, it is easy to contrive that he (*sic*) may have an opportunity of resuming his subscription.

'The question then comes to be, merely, which is most desirable, and if the fact should be that more scope can be given in St. Paul's to the skill of the artist, a foundation laid for the decoration of that church by monuments, and a more handsome and striking monument be in this instance produced, I really don't see that the fancy, which I certainly shared in originally, in favour of Westminster Abbey, is of weight to determine us on that side. I think the whole question, however, of little consequence, or so doubtful that I shall be very glad to have it determined by others.—Yrs. W. W.'

On the back of the letter is written by Banks:—

'St. Paul. Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua.

'Westminster Abbey. Mr. Metcalfe.

'This day fortnight, to meet again here at the same hour. March 26, Baxter's.'

It is clear that at this meeting opinions were greatly divided. On a small piece of paper the following memoranda in Banks's handwriting are labelled 'Arguments used on March 26.' They are probably the heads of the speech that Sir Joseph made at the committee meeting.

'I protest against Dr. Johnson's monument being erected in St. Paul's. Because the Doctor's body lies in Westminster Abbey; because I verily believe it was, when he was living, his wish that his monument might be erected there; because his executors have engaged with the Dean and Chapter to erect it there, which engagement has been confirmed by the subscribers; because the subscribers gave their money under an engagement it

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should be erected there; because this committee have not been invested by the general meeting with power to alter their resolution of erecting it there, or with any power whatever except that of procuring money.'

On the date after the meeting, however, Sir Joseph wrote the following impartial letter to Mr. Malone, at that time in Dublin. The draft preserved is in the handwriting of Sir Joseph Banks.

Letter to Mr. Malone.

'March 27, 1791.

'MY DEAR SIR,—I am required by our colleagues in the Committee appointed to provide money for erecting a monument to the memory of Johnson to request your opinion respecting the most proper place for it—Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's. If you favour us with your sentiments, I have no doubt they will have great weight in our decision, which we hope to make on the 9th day of April next.

'Sir Joshua, who prefers St. Paul's, says that the honour as well as the interests of the arts are materially at stake, and will receive great advantage if we set the example of a monument in a church which has hitherto been fallow for the harvest of the chisel; that Westminster is already so crowded that it would be a deadly sin against taste to increase the squeeze of tombs there; and that St. Paul's is the most honorable station for the monument of a great man. Burke says waggishly that this is borrowing from Peter to give to Paul, but he supports Sir Joshua fully and firmly.

'On the other hand, the supporters of St. Peter say they are engaged to the body of Johnson and the Public, and to the Dean and Chapter to erect it there; that they ardently wish to make an end of a business that has been kept in suspence so very long; and lastly that they fear their funds, between 7 & 800 Pounds, will be very short of the necessary expence of such a monument as the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's will require, which they understand is to be of colossal dimensions. This last argument however Sir Joshua has answered by declaring if by further solicitation, in which he expects the Committee to cooperate, sufficient money cannot be raised, he will himself furnish it. Thus stood the matter, when we parted last night. Pray let us hear from you in time. You will essentially oblige us all and none more than 'Your faithfull servt.,

'J. B.

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The only trace of what Malone's answer to this letter may have been is in the following remark in Prior's *Life of Malone*:—'St. Paul's, as he (Malone) expressed it, was too modern, too cold and raw to lie comfortably in, but in a century or two hence would look more habitable!' On the back of Banks's draft of letter is written:—

'Present at the Committee—Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Burke, Mr. Wyndham, Mr. Metcalfe, Mr. Boswell, Sir Wm. Scott, Sir J. B.' But it is by no means clear on which day these seven met, nor whether the meeting called for April 9 took place. If it did, it was again adjourned to April 16, when the sculptor also was present. For that occasion also Banks gives the heads of a speech:—

'It is far from impossible that after the erection of Dr. J.'s monument in St. Paul's, a future Dean and Chapter may change their minds respecting the erection of future monuments, and pleading Sir Christopher Wren's deprecations, either remove it or prevent any others from being placed with it. Westminster is the Repository of the illustrious dead. St. Paul's may be, but the decision is not by any means yet made. (Arguments used on the 15th of April, 1791.)'

There is also this important

'*Memorandum made at the Meeting.*

'Sir Joshua Reynolds undertakes that, in case sufficient money is not subscribed to defray the increased expense of erecting Dr. Johnson's monument in St. Paul's, that he will pay the sum wanting, and Mr. Bacon undertakes to erect the monument upon Sir Joshua's credit. Declared by Sir Joshua and agreed by Mr. Bacon on the 15th of April.'

This generosity of Sir Joshua settled the question with the committee, though it is said that two of its members resigned in consequence of the decision. Probably, from the arguments used by him, Sir Joseph Banks was one of the two. The monument was placed in St. Paul's Cathedral, near one of the central pillars under the Dome. It was not, after all, the first monument in St. Paul's. That honour belongs to John Howard, the philanthropist, who died in 1790; and his statue was from the hand of the same sculptor, Bacon. On the suggestion of Sir Joshua the Royal Academy elected a committee to advise the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's to regulate the disposition of the monuments, examine sculptors' models, and determine the magnitude of the figures. A little later the Academy voted 100*l.* towards the

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monument of Johnson, on the ground that he had held the appointment of Professor of Ancient Literature to the Academy. It was said that King George III. disapproved of this expenditure of the funds of the Academy, but surely not from any disapproval of Johnson. An elaborate defence of the vote by Reynolds is given in his life by the artist Leslie and Tom Taylor.

The propriety of erecting monuments in St. Paul's Cathedral had been frequently discussed during the previous twenty years. Reynolds steadily maintained that monuments were needed to set off the architecture of St. Paul's. In his *Journey to Flanders and Holland*, he says: 'Sculpture languishes for the same reason, being not with us made subservient to our religion, as it is with the Roman Catholics. Almost the only demand for considerable works of sculpture arises from the monuments erected to eminent men. . . . Westminster Abbey is already full; and if the House of Commons should vote another monument at the public expense, there is no place, no proper place certainly, in the Abbey, in which it can be placed. . . . While this Gothick structure is encumbered and overloaded with ornaments which have no agreement or correspondence with the taste and style of the building, St. Paul's looks forlorn and desolate, or at least destitute of ornaments suited to the magnificence of the fabrick. There are places designed by Sir Christopher Wren for monuments, which might become a noble ornament to the building if properly adapted to their situation.'

It must now be added that the third monument in St. Paul's was that of Sir Joshua Reynolds himself. Within less than twelve months of the handsome offer made by the good Sir Joshua, that great painter laid aside his brush for ever. Death was indeed reaping a rich harvest amongst those engaged in this matter. Boswell died in 1795; Burke in 1797, the latter's death being immediately preceded by that of the son whom Boswell in his letter called 'young Burke.' Bacon, the sculptor of the monument, died a century ago in 1799. Many a monument has been placed in St. Paul's since, and it is indeed fortunate that the wise counsel of the eminent painter prevailed. It is fitting that a man of such influence as Johnson, the dictator over the English language, and in his day the reigning chief of the English world of letters, should afterwards have to keep him company the greatest of English soldiers and 'the greatest sailor since our world began.' 'Johnson might be well received as the representative of the literature of England.'[1]

EDWARD E. MORRIS.

[1] Dean Milman, *Annals of St. Paul's*, p. 481.

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A Giotto of the Coteswolds.

WHEN Mary Cardross first saw Jethro he was six years old, and still wore petticoats. He was not particularly small for his age, and his appearance was, to say the least of it, peculiar. A cotton frock, made with skirt and body like a housemaid's morning dress, reached to his ankles; and he seemed to have very little underneath, for this outer garment hung limp and straight from waist to heel, except on Sundays, when, fresh from the hands of his aunt, it stuck out all round like a lamp-shade. His hair, cropped very short round the edges, was several inches long on the crown. Mrs. Gegg, by courtesy his 'aunt,' did not even put a basin on his head by way of guide in the shearing, but, brushing all the hair forward from the centre of the crown, laid the scissors against his forehead, and cut the hair close to the skin all round. It grew again quickly, and stuck out above his temples like a new straw thatch.

'Isn't he rather a big boy for petticoats?' Mary asked, as her landlady removed the supper, pausing at intervals to explain Jethro's presence under her roof.

'Yes, 'e be a biggish boy, but I baint a-goin' to be at no expense for 'im as I can 'elp. 'E can wait cum Christmas for 'is trowsies. 'E ought to be thankful as 'e weren't tuk to the workus, an' me only 'is mother's cousin, though 'e *do* call me haunt. 'E be a great expense, and I've 'ad 'im this two year. The most onandiest, nothingly child you ever see—always a-scribblin' and a-messin' and moonin.' I don't set no store by Jethro, I can tell you, miss! 'E's got to be brought up 'ard to hearn 'is own livin''—and Mrs. Gegg paused breathless. Mary said nothing, but she felt rather sorry for Jethro.

Had Mrs. Gegg lived anywhere but in the lovely lonely Coteswold village perched like a smiling fastness in the midst of beech-clad hills, reached only by the loosest and worst of roads, she would hardly have dared to dress a six-year boy in such extra-

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ordinary fashion. Public opinion would have been too strong for her. But Nookham, with its dozen cottages, lived and let live in easy apathy, and Jethro in bitterness of spirit wore his cotton frock. Two years ago Mary had discovered Nookham. Friends had driven her over to have tea in the woods, and to gather the wild strawberries found there in such abundance. She fell in love with the place, and came again upon a private exploring expedition, when she discovered that lodgings were to be had at the post-office, in the house of one Mrs. Gegg. There she spent a most delightful fortnight, sketching. Never was more attentive and honest landlady, never cleaner, more orderly house! It is true that Mary's painting tackle greatly distressed her hostess, partaking as it did of the nature of things 'messy and slummicky,' which her soul abhorred. Otherwise, she liked Mary, as did most people; and she had in her way great toleration for the 'curus ways' of the 'gentry' generally, expecting less of them in the matter of common-sense than she exacted from people of her own class. And now, after two years in Italy, Mary found herself once more in the dear Coteswold country, in the very middle of a perfect June. Nookham generally was unfeignedly pleased to see her again. Few strangers came to stay there, and the roads were too bad and too hilly for even the ubiquitous cyclist. The squire's house was three miles from the village, the vicarage two, and the tall lady with the abundant wavy grey hair and strong kind face had made a very distinct and pleasant impression.

Mary did not catch a glimpse of Jethro during her first day until, happening at post-time to want a letter she had left in her bedroom, she ran upstairs to fetch it.

The room, with door flung wide, faced the narrow staircase. In the very middle of the floor stood Jethro, in rapt contemplation of a large photograph of Giovanni Bellini's Madonna—the one in the sacristy of the Frari at Venice—which Mary had placed on the little mantelpiece.

The day was well on in the week, the cotton frock hung in limp and draggled folds about the childish limbs, and the queer little creature's attitude was almost pathetically boyish as he stood, legs far apart, his hands grasping the lilac cotton where pockets ought to have been.

For a full minute Mary stood watching him. He made no attempt to touch the picture; in fact—and afterwards the circumstance seemed significant—he stood at some distance from it, that he might see it whole.

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Mary must have moved, for the stairs creaked. Jethro jumped, did not even turn his head to see who was coming, but darted under the bed with the instant speed of a startled squirrel. She came into the room, shut the door, and sat down on her trunk, remarking, 'If you come out I'll show you some more pictures!' Dead silence for five minutes, while Mary sat patiently waiting. She was determined that she would in no way frighten or constrain the timid child, for it seemed to her that the little Cotswold peasant who stood gazing with absorbed interest at her favourite Madonna must be worth knowing.

'I can't think why you stay under there, Jethro,' she said at last; 'we could have such a nice time together if you would come out, and I must go directly to finish my letters.'

But, like Brer Rabbit, Jethro 'lay low and said nuffin,' so Mary was fain to go and finish her letters, determined to play a waiting game. From time to time she stopped writing, looking pained and puzzled. 'It is dreadful that a little child should be so afraid of one,' she said to herself; 'what can they have done to him?' Presently Jethro rushed past the open door, and later on there came from the direction of the back kitchen a sound uncommonly like smacks.

Mrs. Gegg laid the supper as though she were dealing cards with the angry emphasis indulged in by certain whist players after a series of bad hands. Mary ventured on a timid remark to the effect that Nookham had changed but little during her two years' absence. Mrs. Gegg replied that 'Squire didn't encourage no fancy building,' and that therefore it was likely to remain the same for some time to come. Conversation languished, and she went into the garden to 'take in' certain exquisitely white garments still spread upon the currant bushes, while Mary stood at the front door waiting for the nightingale to 'touch his lyre of gold,' when another and very different sound broke into the scented stillness—a breathless, broken sound of sobs—a child's sobs. She listened for a moment, then turned and went back into the house to follow the sound. From the landing window she noted with relief that Mrs. Gegg was engaged in converse with a neighbour (Mary stood in great awe of her landlady); she mounted a ladder leading to the attic, and there, under the slates, lying full length on the outside of his clean little bed, was Jethro, sobbing with an *abandon* and intensity that left Mary in no doubt as to what she should do this time. Bumping her head violently, and nearly driving it through the slates in her haste, for she could by no

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means stand upright, she climbed in and reached the side of the bed.

Her entrance was so noisy that the child had plenty of time to vanish, as he had done in the afternoon; but he was evidently so astonished by her appearance that no thought of flight occurred to him; he even forgot to be frightened, left off crying, and asked eagerly:

'Did you 'urt your 'ead?'

'No, not much. I heard you crying, and came to see what was the matter.'

Jethro looked queerer than ever. He wore a voluminous unbleached calico nightgown, several sizes too big for him; the big tears on his cheeks shone like jewels in the soft June twilight, and the thatch of tow-coloured hair was rumpled into a quickset hedge above his great, grave forehead.

'I've bin beat,' he whispered.

'Why, what had you done?'

'I thrown a stwun at Earny Mustoe akez 'e did call oi "Jemima," and it did break 's mother's windy.'

'Is he bigger than you?'

'Yes, 'e be noine!'

'Then why didn't you go for him and hit him? You couldn't break any windows that way, and it would teach him better manners.'

Jethro stared in astonishment at this warlike lady.

'But 'e be ever so much bigger nor me,' he exclaimed, 'and I be allays beat aterwards;' then, remembering his woes, 'and it do 'urt so, it do,' and Jethro began to wail again.

Mary gathered the woe-begone little figure into her arms and sat down on the floor, saying cheerfully:

'Cheer up, old chap; I'll pay for that window, and you mustn't throw any more stones; and don't cry any more, and we'll have ever such nice times while I'm here.'

It was evident that Jethro was not used to being cuddled. He sat stiff and solemn on her knee, staring at her with great puzzled eyes. She talked to him as tender women talk to children, and finally put him to bed, tucked him in, kissed and blessed him, and climbed down the ladder again. Much to her relief she saw that Mrs. Gegg was still in the garden.

Jethro lay awake, staring at a patch of moonlight on the white-washed wall. Hazily, vaguely there arose in his mind a recollection that at one time some one always tucked him into bed—

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some one who looked kindly at him. He couldn't remember the face, but the eyes were like the tall lady's—like the lady's in the picture downstairs; and again Jethro wanted to cry, but not because he had been 'beat.' However, he would not cry; she had asked him not to, and she had such sharp ears, and she would come to see him every night, and she had lots more pictures. Here the tall lady and the lady in the picture became inextricably mixed up, and Jethro slept that blessed sleep of childhood which is oblivion.

'I'd just like to show you, miss, a present as I've 'ad from my nephew down Cubberly way. 'E's on'y fifteen, and 'e's that clever with 'is fingers——' Mrs. Gegg held up for Mary's admiration a frame made of fir-cones which had been varnished and squeezed together till they looked like a hollow square of highly polished brown sausages. 'There, Jethro, if you could make summut like that!'

'I likes 'em better a-growin',' said Jethro, softly.

During the scornful scolding that followed Mary watched Jethro. His serene grey eyes under the square, peaceful forehead looked a trifle weary, and he sighed as his aunt harangued him, but he did not seem greatly disturbed. After all, whether people scolded or not, gracious, gentle things continued a-growin', and Jethro through the sweet uses of adversity had early learnt that 'Nature, the kind old nurse,' never refuses consolation to such of her children as seek it in sweet solitary places with an understanding heart.

Mary found Jethro very difficult to get at. He followed her about, and would sit watching her paint for hours in silent, absolute absorption, but he very seldom spoke himself. One day, as they were walking together down the steep stony road leading to the woods, he suddenly clasped her round the knees, exclaiming, 'You be such a dear 'ooman!'

Mary stooped hastily and kissed the little upturned face. In a life compassed about with much affection and many friends no one had ever spoken to her with such a rapture of appreciation, and she fell to thinking how little she had done to deserve it. Two days after she got a letter.

'The mater cannot write herself,' it ran, 'because she is busy with a big chest in the attic upon which the dust of ages has hitherto been allowed to rest in peace. From time to time you may hear her murmur, "Six, and an average size. Poor little lad! What a shame!—this will do, I think." So you know what is

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going on. Do you remember the bundles? All neatly docketed —"To fit boy of twelve," &c. A regular trousseau is coming, so tell that kiddie to cheer up.'

Three days later Jethro appeared at school in all the glory of jacket and 'trowsies;' and the very boy who had most grievously tormented him about his petticoats chastised another on his behalf who made derisive remarks about a 'gal in trowsies.' Thus the chief misery in Jethro's life was removed, and he felt that he bid fair to become a social success.

His aunt manifested no objection to the new clothes. A thrifty soul, she believed in taking what she could get, and remarked quite good-naturedly, that Jethro did look a bit more like other folk now.

'Of a Saturday' Mrs. Gegg 'hearthstoned' the whole of her back kitchen till its spotlessness rivalled that of the whitewashed walls. The placid expectancy of Saturday evening had settled on the village. Mary, tired by her long day's painting, was resting upon the slippery horsehair sofa, and meditating on the impossibility of reproducing on canvas the brilliant transparency of young green larches, when her landlady burst into the room, positively breathless with passion. 'Just you come 'ere, miss, and see what that there mishtiful young imp o' darkness been and done. I'll warm 'im so's 'e sha'n't forget it in a 'urry!' Mary hastily followed the woman into the sacred back kitchen, and there in a corner near the pump crouched Jethro, one arm curved above his head to protect it from a renewal of the rain of blows that had just fallen, while the floor was decorated by a monochrome landscape, painted by Jethro with Mrs. Gegg's blue-bag.

Mary gazed at it with astonishment. With strong certainty of touch the child had splashed in by means of the coarse blue the stretch of hills that met his eyes every time he went out at Mrs. Gegg's front door. The queer impressionist sketch had atmosphere, distance, and, above all, perspective. 'Oh, Mrs. Gegg!' cried Mary, holding back the angry little woman with her strong arms as she was advancing across the picture to wreak fresh vengeance upon Jethro, 'leave it! leave it till Monday, and I'll give you blue and whitening to last you a twelvemonth. It is a wonderful picture! Some day you will be proud of him. He couldn't help it. We none of us gave him anything to draw on. Why didn't you tell me, child, that you could draw like this?'

Astonishment was cooling Mrs. Gegg's wrath. She had heard, nay, upon one occasion seen, that a pavement artist in distant

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Gloucester earned good money, though it was but a poor trade. Then there was Miss Cardross, always messing with paints and things—perhaps she really knew something about it. 'If you will leave the picture where it is till Monday,' continued Mary, 'I will ride over to Colescombe to-morrow and persuade an artist friend to come and look at it, and we will see what can be done for Jethro. Please, Mrs. Gegg!' And Mary got her way.

. . . . . .

'You must leave him where he is,' said the great art-critic to Mary when he had inspected the frescoed floor. 'He may be a genius. I think he is. All the more reason to leave him alone just now. Give him paper and paints—lots of them; don't lose sight of him, and we'll help him when the right time comes. It hasn't come yet.'

So Mary left him in the peace of the kindly Coteswold hills. And while Bellini's Madonna smiles down upon him from the whitewashed attic wall, while sun and cloud make light and shadow for him on beech-clad slope and grassy plain, and life is full 'of mysteries and presences, innumerable, of living things,' we need not pity Jethro. For, even as one who wandered long ago upon the steeps of far Fiesole found infinite potentialities among solitary places and pleasant pastoral creatures, even so in time to come the little Coteswold peasant may enter into his inheritance in that kingdom where 'every colour is lovely and every space is light. The world, the universe, is divine; all sadness is a part of harmony, and all gloom a part of peace.'

L. ALLEN HARKER.

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The Study of Plant Life.

THE Alps! Amongst fairly well-to-do English men and women, are there any whose hearts do not beat a little faster at the word, either in memory of happy days of long ago or anticipation of such to come? The early start, the toil and vicissitudes of the day, the cozy inn, the well-dressed dinner to meet a raging appetite, the social evening, and then those crisp, clean sheets, altogether make it just a luxury to live and move and feel. It is a glorious thing to conquer the Jungfrau, to look down from the summit of Mont Blanc on a subject world of snow and ice and crevasses. These are amongst the things that brace the nerves, harden the sinews, and make the Anglo-Saxons who delight in them a dominant race.

But it is only to the few that this high privilege is given. The vast majority of men, and still more of women, must perforce content themselves with humbler joys, with less boastful conquests. And yet I know not but that the memory of a week at Zermatt, of the like at Mürren, or, to travel south, at Monte Generoso, may not have sweeter memories for these than for the conquerors of peaks. To this end, however, it is essential that they should have some pursuit which will replace the use of the ice-axe; nor have we much difficulty in determining what this should be for the majority of educated people. Next to its glorious peaks and snowfields, the great beauty of the Alpine chain is its flowers. No one who has once seen a field of *Gentiana verna* in the Engadine in June, or of *Primula farinosa* in the lowlands about the same time, can ever forget them. To me the memory will ever be green of my first introduction to *Androsace carnea*. It was high up, with little visible all round but snow. A projecting rock cropped out of the snow; in a hollow a little soil had accumulated, and this was cushioned with this lovely plant.

Saussure studied geology in the Alps with a purpose, and other men of science have left behind them far-reaching results

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from researches in the same beautiful mountains; but studies of this kind need a long and laborious previous training. There is perhaps nothing that will enable ordinary people, who have neither time nor inclination for deep study, to taste a few drops of the sweets of science with such pleasant accompaniments, as an intelligent study of botany.

The adjective is intentional, and should be emphasised; for there is a large class of persons, chiefly young ladies, who go abroad furnished, at best, with 'Wood's Tourist's Flora,' and a dictionary of botanical terms. Their brothers bring them in large handfuls of flowers from their walks, and they spend laborious evenings identifying these; but to some it never seems to occur that it is worth inquiring as to the function of the stamens which they count so conscientiously; why the blossom of one flower is of gorgeous hue while another is insignificant; why some emit their scent by day and others by night; why one droops its head and another holds it erect; why one is bare in the throat and others covered with hairs; or why in some species these hairs point upwards and in others downwards;—with a hundred similar questions. Nor is it only in the study of botany that such knowledge comes in usefully. How pleasant it must be to the geologist when he comes across a fragment of what once was wood, but, probably millions of years ago, was converted into flint, to be able to tell at a glance whether the tree of which it was a part belonged to the endogenous or the exogenous order of plants; to that family of which the palms are now the most noted examples, or that to which most of our forest trees belong; and how much such a knowledge may suggest of the natural history of the country at the time, of its climate, its fertility, its fauna!

I humbly apologise! I am afraid that I may be misunderstood as speaking disrespectfully of the young ladies aforesaid. Nothing could be further from my thoughts or intentions. I have spent too many delightful evenings in assisting such investigations with the microscope to speak lightly of them. The object of this paper is, not to discourage botany of this kind, but to suggest to those who practise it how much more delightful their study would be if they would pursue it a little deeper.

Few things could conduce more to this than a previous study of Kerner's most interesting work on 'The Natural History of Plants,' admirably translated by F. W. Oliver, profusely illustrated (a great help to the beginner), and published in four half-volumes, comprising about 1,800 pages. When we learn from him how

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it is that the instant the snow has melted from a spot, there the *Soldanella* is found in full bloom, we shall look upon its graceful fringed bells with a quickened interest.

If you ask a class of children what is the essential difference between themselves, as representatives of the animal kingdom, and a cabbage, as representing the vegetable kingdom, you will (at least if the children are Irish, as all my little neighbours are) receive a number of answers more or less intelligent. You will be told that one is alive and the other not; that one can feel, see, hear, taste, smell, and the other not; that one is capable of locomotion and the other fixed to the soil; or, if it be a higher class in a board school, you will probably hear something about exhaling respectively carbonic acid gas and oxygen, or about consuming organic and inorganic matter as food; and yet one and all of these characteristics can be shown to belong to some species only, not to all.

The truth is that there is no clearly defined division between the animal and vegetable kingdoms. It is often difficult, if not impossible, to declare of some that are just on the borderland to which kingdom they belong. The most up-to-date definition is that about food attributed above to the objectionably precocious infant at the head of a board school; and yet how far it is from being a true definition will be seen from the following examples.

To begin with ourselves. We and many other animals make salt, a pure mineral, a constant article of food, while not a few plants are as truly carnivorous as a tiger, catching their prey, converting their structure for the time being into a stomach, and digesting the nutritious parts just as we do our dinner. Our bogs and mountains are studded with the attractive little sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia* and *longifolia*). From a loose rosette of battledore-shaped leaves rises the panicle of somewhat inconspicuous flowers. The leaves are thickly sprinkled with bright red tentacles, each crowned with a tiny drop of sticky mucilage, which glitters in the sun and gives the plant its name. But woe to the fly that is attracted by its beauty! Once let him light upon it and there is no escape, the mucilage holds him fast. There is a story somewhere of an Englishman who won a large sum at a gambling-house in Paris. Unwilling to walk the streets at night with so large a sum about him, he was persuaded to engage a room in a lodging-house next door. Fortunately for him he was too excited to sleep, for in the still hours he suddenly became aware that the tester of the bed on which he was lying was slowly and silently descending

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to smother him. The feelings of the fly on the sundew must be somewhat similar to his. Equally slowly and silently the tentacles which cover the leaf fold themselves around him; and when they expand again there is nothing left of the fly but the wings and the skin, the rest having been assimilated by the leaf.

Another carnivorous plant is the bladderwort (*Utricularia*). It is an aquatic plant, wholly submerged with the exception of the blossom, and profusely furnished with small bladder-like appendages about the size of snipe-shot. The bladders are open, and the opening is fringed with hairs pointing inwards like the wires of a rat-trap. The small animal organisms, whose number and variety in a single drop of water when examined under the microscope astonish one, can enter, but they cannot leave it. There and then they turn into vegetable.

Once only (it was in the Dauphiné Alps) have I seen the beautiful yellow flower of the bladderwort rising from the water. Having made out what it was, I tried to bring some home in a bottle, but failed. The failure was of small importance, for having thus identified it, I found it growing in abundance about four miles from my own house. I transferred some to a pond in the garden, where it thrives amazingly, but I have never seen it in blossom in this country.

In England, Scotland, and Ireland, our botanist, if he is fortunate, may find the curious subterranean parasite *Lathræa squamaria*, whose English name of toothwort is derived from the ivory-white scales or leaves which cover the underground stem, and which are each a somewhat similar trap for minute insects that make their way through the loosened earth. Thus in air, earth, and water vegetables have their traps set to turn the tables on the animal world, by catching and devouring many of its members.

We all know the evils of what is called 'breeding in and in,' and so do plants. To secure cross-fertilisation their greatest ingenuity and most strenuous efforts are directed. I shall show presently how plants enlist the services of birds in the distribution of their seed, but for the purpose of cross-fertilisation their chief servitors are winged insects, especially bees and moths. It is to attract these that they surround their pollen-bearing stamens with petals of every hue, which add such a charm to life. It is as a bait for them that the drop of honey is distilled at the base of each flower. It is for the night-flying moths that certain flowers reserve their scent till the sun is down; and it may be

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noted that these are generally devoid of bright colours. Such would be useless to them in the dark, and they scorn waste.

It has been said that if there were no cats, there could be no clover. The connection is not at first sight obvious, but it is this: clover is wholly dependent for fertilisation on the humble-bee; field-mice are especially partial to bee bread and the grub of the humble-bee; if it were not for the cats, the field-mice would exterminate the bees, and the clover would perish. It is ingenious, but the author of it forgot the unjustly persecuted owl, who does more service to the farmer in keeping down the mice than all the pussy-cats in the place.

More pages than the editor would allow me would be needed to describe all the 'dodges' (I can call them nothing else) that plants are up to to secure a cross-fertilisation. I can but just mention a few. It is with this view that some plants are protogynous—that is to say, it is not till the pistil has been fertilised by pollen from another plant that the stamens ripen their pollen, to be carried in turn to later flowers. A notable instance of this is the *Aristolochia clematitis*, a plant with an insignificant-looking tubular flower of about an inch long. At the bottom of the tube there is a globular chamber which contains the honey. The tube inside is covered with fine hairs, all pointing downwards. Thus small flies can enter, and, if they have previously been in other flowers, the pistil receives from them the pollen that is needed. Once in, the fly cannot escape at pleasure. He must stay there till the pistil is withered, and the stamens have, in their turn, ripened, and deposited their pollen in the chamber where the fly is. Then the imprisoning hairs wither up, probably the supply of honey ceases, and the fly, thoroughly coated with pollen, is free to depart. Liberty is sweet, but to his taste honey is sweeter still. He seeks another flower where the scent of honey is strong, and so the process is repeated till the supply of blossoms ceases.

In a previous number of this magazine I have mentioned the sensitive nature of the stamens of the barberry, and how, when touched near the base by a honey-seeking insect, they spring forward, one by one, to cover him with their pollen, and so compel him to convey it to the next flower that he may visit. Another pretty experiment displays a mechanical arrangement with the same object. When at rest the stamens of the salvia with their anthers lie hidden within the hood, where they are protected from wet. If, however, our experimenting botanist will

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take a blunt-pointed pin, and, holding it at about the length of a bee's trunk from the end, insert it in the tube, he will find that it there encounters the short arm of a lever, the long arm of which is the anther-bearing end of the stamen. In its descent the pin (or trunk of the bee) pushes back this lever, thus causing the anthers to emerge from the hood, and gently to touch the finger of the operator, which represents the back of the bee, depositing its pollen there. On the pin being withdrawn, they retire again within the hood, to await another visit.

Though insects are the chief agents of cross-fertilisation, they are far from being the only ones. There are many plants —such, for instance, as the grasses, and, among trees, *coniferæ* —whose agent is the wind. They produce pollen in such abundance that a pistil can scarcely escape fertilisation at the hands of the breeze. They do not need to attract the visits of insects, and consequently have neither honey, nor scent, nor gorgeous flowers.

Some plants do not seem to be aware of the benefit to be derived from crossing, and have made all their arrangements for self-fertilisation; while others are so resolved to discourage it that they will not admit the presence of the two sexes in the same flower; for instance, the hazel, the catkins of which contain stamens only, the female flowers being tiny red ones sessile on the twigs, that might easily escape attention. Others carry their table of affinity still further, enacting that no pistil shall be fertilised by pollen from the same tree. These have consequently male and female plants. An interesting example of this is the *Aucuba Japonica*. We have long had the female plant, which was easily propagated by cuttings, but bore no fruit. About a generation ago Japan was opened up, and some botanist brought home the male plant. Since then our old friend, rejoicing in her recovered spouse, has brought forth abundantly, and, where he is near, is yearly covered with brilliant berries.

Not less notable are the habits of plants and their relations to animals in the matter of the distribution of their seed. Some seeds, like those of the thistle, are furnished with a downy apparatus, which enables them to float upon the breeze. They can float thus for miles, seeking a new habitat. Others, like burs, are furnished with hooks, by which they attach themselves to any passing animal, sticking to him perhaps for days, but sure eventually to be dropped somewhere away from the parent plant. Others, again, explode their seed vessel with sufficient force to scatter their seed far and wide. Children, grown-up ones some-

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times, are fond of touching the ripening pods of balsam, and trying not to be startled by the explosion which ensues.

Of all the arrangements for dispersing seed, there is, however, none at all to compare with the compact which plants have apparently made with the animal kingdom, and especially with birds. It would almost seem as if there was a formal treaty between the two kingdoms, the vegetable saying to the other, 'We will produce seed in abundance, far more in a single year than the whole world would suffice to grow, and this shall be to you for food, you rendering to us in return this service, that you deposit in a favourable position for growth, and uninjured, one grain in every ten thousand.' Let us see how the animals fulfil their part of the compact. A man picks an apple, and munches it as he goes along, throwing the core away, the core in which are the seeds, which are thus deposited yards, or perhaps miles, away from the parent tree.

Why, on a winter's day, do we see the rooks and the sparrows contending which shall have the first turn-over of the freshly deposited horse-droppings? Why, but because a few grains of oats often pass undigested through the horse? And perhaps an odd grain may escape even their sharp eyes and germinate, thus covered and manured. Other small animals, like the field-mice, make their subterranean store, some of which, through casualties in their small army, escape and grow.

The birds, however, are the principal agents in the distribution of seed. Let us glance at a few instances of this. The branches of an oak and the ground underneath may be seen in acorn-time thick with rooks gorging themselves with acorns. But what is yon glossy purple fellow doing apart from the others? He has flown into the middle of the field, where he can have a better eye upon approaching enemies, and is vigorously hammering away at the ground with his strong beak. Having eaten as many acorns as his craw will hold, he is burying a few with an eye to hard times. When those times come, the 'boy with the gun' may have got him, or he may fail to locate some of his buried treasures, which grow up, and in time prove their gratitude by repaying the acorn with compound interest to his descendants.

The blackbird is especially fond of the berries of the ivy. When he has filled his craw with them, he retires to his favourite tree, and, putting his head under his wing, sleeps the sleep of the just. In the morning the ground under his perch is white with his droppings; but if these be examined, it will be found that the

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actual seeds have been too hard for his gizzard, and have been deposited in the very spot most favourable for their success in the battle of life—at the foot of a tree. I must give one more example of this compact. In order that they may germinate, the seeds of the mistletoe must be smudged on to the branch of certain kinds of trees. With this view, the plant surrounds its seeds with a highly glutinous mucilage, which it flavours with a nicety to the taste of the thrush. In eating the berries the thrush can no more escape getting his beak covered outside with this sticky mucilage than a child can indulge in a feast of bilberries with a clean mouth. His dinner ended, he goes, like a tidy child, to wipe his mouth; for this he finds the branch of a tree quite the handiest sort of napkin, but it is not the mucilage alone that he wipes off; an occasional seed has also stuck outside, and this too he deposits on the branch together with the mucilage needed for its adhesion there, in the only position and under the only conditions suited to its growth, and which could not otherwise be easily attained.

It was a purely utilitarian idea that first drew me to a superficial study of botany. As a boy I had read, as all boys do greedily, the story of a shipwreck. The crew had, of course, been cast upon an uninhabited shore, where no food offered but strange plants that might have death hidden in their leaves. Now amongst the officers was one who had some knowledge of botany, enough at least to make him aware that no crucifer is poisonous to the human subject. To him also the plants themselves were strange, but he caused all that were gathered to be brought to him: the cruciferæ he put in the pot, and the rest he rejected; and so he kept his crew alive till help came. The cruciferæ are so named from their petals forming a cross; but let none be misled into supposing that all cross-petaled flowers are therefore innocuous. Some are highly poisonous. A true crucifer must not only have four petals, but it must also have four divisions of the calyx; the stamens must also be examined and prove to be six in number, of which four are long and two short.

Only doctors fully understand how much an experimental and scientific study of plant life has tended to alleviate the ills from which we suffer in our persons and our properties. It was not till the microscope had laid bare the fact that the dread potato disease was simply a fungus, that the means of treating it, which have now reduced its ravages to a comparatively insignificant amount, were discovered. What do we not owe to quinine? But without a chemical and experimental study of plant life we

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should never have known that it was to be found in the bark of certain trees.

A study of the natural orders of plants may at first sight appear unattractive, but it is full of interesting facts; witness that about the extensive order of cruciferæ mentioned above. I hate Greek names and never use such if there is an English equivalent; but English or Greek, surely it is deeply interesting to learn that, as a rule, all monocotyledons are endogenous, while dicotyledons are exogenous, so that when the first tender seed-leaves of a tree appear above ground, the botanist can tell, within limits, of what nature its timber will be. Even to the uninitiated, such names as Coniferæ, Rosaceæ, Compositæ, Umbelliferæ, Liliaceæ, Gramineæ, or, amongst non-flowering plants, the Ferns, the Mosses, the Fungi, the Algæ, and the Lichens, convey at once certain well-defined characteristics which are a help in the general arrangement of such knowledge as one may happen to acquire. I once asked the members of a Y.M.C.A. if they could name any non-flowering plant. There was but one response; it was from the curate—'carrots'!! And yet the species of cryptogamous, or non-flowering, plants far exceed in number those that bear flowers.

If there is one class of scientists to whose studies botany would appear alien, it is the mathematicians—and yet at p. 396 of the first volume of Kerner will be found some very curious facts, too long to quote here, as to the mathematical distribution of leaves on the stem.

What, I may be asked, is the use of learning all this? Well, if the querist confines his definition of 'use' to money-grubbing, even then the answer may be found above; but, if that word includes the attainment of happiness, it is of the highest use. Few things can more add to the happiness of travel, or even of a saunter round one's own garden, or a walk through town or country, than some knowledge of the reason of things, some perception of how the great God has woven all His works together, making each dependent on the other, till the heart breaks out in its hallelujah, 'O ye mountains and hills, O all ye green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever.'

THOMAS COOKE-TRENCH.

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In the Name of a Woman.

By Arthur W. Marchmont,

Author of 'By Right of Sword,' 'A Dash for a Throne,' &c.

CHAPTER V.

'SPERNOW.'

A NIGHT'S reflection brought but slight relief to my anxiety and doubt. How that wily Russian general had succeeded so easily and promptly in discovering all about me, I was at a loss to guess; nor was it of much profit to inquire. He had the facts, and the question was how he would use them; and the first gleam of an answer came from a very small thing.

He had offered me first three days in which to leave the country, and then had extended the time to a week. Why? I came to the conclusion at length that he had probably a double reason, for he was not the man to do anything without a clear reason. He was all against my joining the party of the Prince, and was probably resolved to go to extreme lengths to prevent me. But he knew also, though he had been crafty enough not to admit it openly, that I was an Englishman; and that fact might well embarrass him in dealing with me.

Any ill-treatment of a British subject at such a juncture might bring about just such grave complications with our Foreign Office as might imperil the whole Russian under-current policy. That was, therefore, unquestionably one of my strong cards to play, and I resolved to use it promptly.

I judged that in all probability my correspondence would be tampered with, and would, if necessary, pass under his own eyes; so I wrote a letter to a friend in England, stating the fact plainly that I had had an interview with General Kolfort, the Russian leader, in which the fact that I was a British subject had been dis-

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cussed between us, and added a few words of assumed annoyance that this should have happened, as it might interfere with my plans in making a career in Bulgaria. I put in some other general matter such as might be written in a friendly letter, and finished with a request that my correspondent would send me two or three articles I had left in his care. This was all fable, of course; but I wrote it to make it more difficult for the General to suppress the letter. Then I added a postscript, with the usual sting in it.

'If you get a chance, you might drop a side hint to Edwardes, of the Foreign Office, that I am here, and known to be English.'

I sealed the letter with careful clumsiness, so that the envelope could easily be opened without the seal being broken, marked it 'Urgent. Strictly private,' and then gave it to a waiter to post. If I was under the surveillance he had suggested, I felt convinced that nothing more was necessary to insure its getting immediately into the General's hands. It would at least give him food for thought.

Then as to his second object. Why had he given me any time at all? A Russian party, strong and unscrupulous enough to plan the assassination of the reigning Prince himself—as they had done—would have thought nothing of keeping me, a mere Roumanian Count (as I told them I was when they had me on the previous evening), rushing me off incontinently to the frontier, and bidding me be off about my business under fear of a stray bullet should I attempt to return. But he had given me a week to deliberate, and I drew the inference that he was really anxious to have an Englishman on his side, and that he meant to use the week to bring strong inducements to bear upon me.

And through all these reflections one dazzling remembrance flashed, as the sun will flash through thin foliage after a summer shower—the great steady glare caught and reflected from a myriad drops on the wet, dancing leaves. It was the memory of the glorious beauty of the Princess, with that look of solicitude for me and of fear of the General which I had seemed to catch.

I had no more desire to fly the country than I had had to leave her witching presence, and a thousand thoughts rushed through my mind, bewildering, stirring, fascinating me, and all urging me to stay until I had at least probed the meaning of her look, and determined whether I could in any way serve her. If she really stood in need of a friend, how gladly—— And at that point I broke the thought with a laugh at my own silly conceit.

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She had a hundred, aye, a thousand men at her command. And I was a fool.

But I would not leave the country if I could help it, and I ordered a horse and rode out, first to see how nearly my house was ready, and then away for a gallop in the country.

On my return I learned that two officers had called and asked for me; had left word that, as their business was urgent, they would return early in the afternoon. I did not know the names—Captain Dimitrieff and Lieutenant Grassaw—and I could not think what they wanted with me, but I resolved to wait in for them; and while I was waiting, a servant brought me a card from another stranger—Lieutenant Spernow.

The moment he entered I liked his pleasant, cheery looks, and his frank, unrestrained, self-possessed manner impressed me most favourably. With a smile he offered me his hand, and said:

'I have come in a quite unusual way, Count Benderoff. I am sent, in fact, to make your acquaintance. I am assured we shall speedily be friends.'

'I am certainly at your service,' I answered, unable to resist a smile at his singular introduction.

'It has an odd sound after all, hasn't it? And yet, do you know, I've been thinking how I should put it, and rehearsing all the way. It does sound devilish odd from a stranger, but I do hope—for reasons that weigh infinitely with me, I can assure you—that so odd an introduction will really lead to friendship.'

'You say you were sent to me?' I asked, cautiously.

'Yes; I assure you I am frankness itself. They never trust me with important secrets; I blurt them out;' and he laughed, as though that were rather a good trait. 'Old Kolfort sent me—Old Kolfort for one.'

'I saw General Kolfort last evening,' I replied, drily. 'But, sit down and have a cigar, and then tell me why he is so interested in providing me with friends.'

'That's a good straight question, but I'll be hanged if I can answer it. He's such a sly old fox, with fifty secret reasons for every plain one. Thanks, I'll have a cigar. Well, he sent for me this morning—you know, I am on the Russian tack in all this business, and that for a reason which I'm pretty sure to let out before I've been many minutes with you; in fact, bound to, come to think of it—and—let's see, where was I? Oh, yes; he sent for me, and said, "Lieutenant, I have a pleasant duty for you—and an important one. I wish you to go to Count Benderoff and make

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a friend of him—he told me your hotel—and do what you can to make his stay in Sofia pleasant, as it may be only a very short one. You're the best man I know to let him see what's worth seeing in the city, and to let him know what's worth knowing."'

'It promises to be a very kind act on his part.' I spoke sincerely, and my visitor smiled at the words.

'It shall be, if you'll let me, Count, I assure you. But that old fox always has a bitter wrapped up somewhere in the sweet; and as I was leaving, after having talked you over, of course, he pretended to remember something, and said, "Oh, by the way, take this letter to the Count with an apology from me. By an unfortunate mistake it has got opened by some clumsy idiot, and was brought to me to know what should be done. Tell the Count I'm very sorry, but perhaps he may not care to send it for a week or so, after all." "What is it?" said I. "Of no consequence; but the little act will be an introduction for you." Then I saw it was one of those infernal things that are always being done in this country—an intercepted letter, and I felt inclined to fling it in his face, only I daren't. I let him have a word or two about choosing me for such work, but I brought it, and I'm afraid you'll think I'm a regular cad to lend myself to such a thing. But I'll tell you why I decided to bring it in a minute; and I hope I needn't assure you I don't know a word of what's inside.'

I accepted his word without hesitation, and believed in his expressions of disgust at the mission. I took the letter readily enough, and was indeed glad that my little *ruse* had succeeded so completely. Then I gave it a finishing touch.

'I suppose he'll expect you to report what I said. Well, here's the answer.' I struck a match and set fire to the letter, holding it until it was consumed. 'It's not of the least consequence, I assure you, for I took the precaution to send off a duplicate in proper disguise.'

'The devil you did! I'm infernally glad to hear it. I love to hear of old Crafty being licked at his own game.' Then he started and rapped the table as he laughed and asked: 'Was that a decoy? Oh, that's lovely. I won't tell him. I hate the old tyrant, and he knows it; but he knows, too, that I'm horribly afraid of him. And that's what he likes. Gad, that's good!' and he lay back in his chair and laughed aloud at the thought of the General being outwitted. 'And he was so deuced serious, too, that I know he thought he'd done a mighty smart thing.'

He was obviously sincere, and it was impossible not to see that

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he thoroughly enjoyed what he deemed a good joke. When he had had his laugh out, he gave a little sigh of relief as he said:

'Well, that's over, and I hope you'll acquit me of any personal part in the matter or humbug.'

'My dear sir, I acquit you of everything except of having done an unpleasant thing pleasantly,' I answered, cordially.

'Thanks. And now, is your stay going to be very short in Sofia? I must tell you before you answer that that's a thing old Crafty told me to find out. I suppose he has some underground reason or other? He's a beggar for that.'

'Frankly, I don't know. I hope not, but I don't yet know.'

'Well, I was surprised when he mentioned it, because we'd heard that you'd taken a big house, and were going to make a bit of a splash, you know. And, by Jove, it would be a blessing, for most of the houses here are just deadly dull.'

'"*We* heard," you say?'

'How quick you are!' he answered with a smile, and he had a slightly heightened colour as he went on. 'Yes, we—we two; not old Kolfort, you know. But—well, we've had a chat about you more than once; and last night, after you'd been at the General's house, we had a regular consultation about you—and, to tell you the truth, that's another reason why I've come.'

'I don't think I understand.'

'No, of course you don't. I don't altogether. I think; but——' He hesitated, and pulled at his cigar for some moments in a little embarrassment. 'You see, it's a bit difficult to make you understand without telling what a man doesn't care to talk about. I suppose something happened at the General's that affected you closely, and made you—hang it all! Wait a minute, and let me try and think how I was to put it.'

I smiled again at this, and watched him as he fidgeted with his cigar somewhat nervously and uneasily.

'You saw the Princess there, didn't you? I don't know, but I heard something or other; and, anyway, she must have been speaking to—to some one who spoke to me. Doesn't that sound rather ridiculous?'

But I scarcely heard his question. The reference to the Princess Christina had set my thoughts whirling at the bare idea that he was in some remote way a messenger from her, and that she was sufficiently interested in me to make these indirect inquiries as to my movements and intentions.

'Yes, I saw the Princess last night,' I said, breaking the pause.

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'Do you come from her?' I was astonished at the steadiness of the tone in which I spoke.

'Well, yes; but yet not exactly—oh, hang it all, I'd better out with it. I shall only make a mess of things;' and he laughed gaily, and flushed. 'I came to you mainly because I was asked to do so by Mademoiselle Broumoff, who is one of her closest companions; and Mademoiselle Broumoff and I are, in fact, betrothed. Now you've got it, Count; and that's why I fiddled about just now, and didn't know quite what to say.'

'I am much mistaken if Mademoiselle Broumoff, whose acquaintance I shall hope to make, is not an exceedingly fortunate girl, lieutenant; and I speak without the least affectation when I say that your news interests me deeply.'

It did, in all truth. To have as a friend some one who was in the close confidence of the Princess herself, was a stroke of good fortune which I could indeed appreciate; and I resolved to bind this handsome young officer to me by all possible bonds.

'The one commission is an antidote to the other, at any rate, I hope,' said Spernow; 'and if it's any gratification to you to know it, you can rest assured that the Princess takes a lively interest in you, and for some reason or other feels herself under some sort of obligation to you. Frankly, I don't know what it is; but I do know there are plenty of our fellows who'd like to stand in your shoes in such a thing. You can't think how we worship that woman!' he cried, with a flash of sudden enthusiasm.

'I can think of no cause for such a feeling of obligation,' said I, speaking indifferently to hide the tingling glow of delight at his words.

'Oh, of course. By Jove, I was nearly forgetting,' he exclaimed, with a jerk, as he plunged his hand into his pocket and brought out a packet of papers. 'Are you engaged for to-morrow night?'

'I? No indeed.'

'Then you'll be able to come all right. I've got you a card for the ball at the Assembly. It's a big do; and most of the folks worth knowing will be there, if you want to know them.'

'Is this from the General?'

'Well, not exactly, though he'll be glad enough for you to go. Mademoiselle Broumoff put me up to it.'

'Then I may have the pleasure of seeing her there?'

'Of course, she's going, rather; and the Princess too. You'll come?'

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'I shall be very pleased. It is just the chance I shall welcome.'

Was this another little personal attention from the Princess, or merely a development of the policy of winning me to the Russian side? I was turning this over, and thinking how far I could get the answer from Spernow, when a servant came to say that the two officers who had called earlier in the day had returned.

I told the man to show them in, and explained matters to Spernow. He knew them, he said, but not their errand.

This was soon explained, and caused me no little surprise.

'We come from Lieutenant Ristich,' said Captain Dimitrieff, speaking very formally and stiffly.

'And who is Lieutenant Ristich?' I asked. 'I do not know him.'

'You met yesterday at General Kolfort's house, and he considers that you insulted him. Will you be good enough to tell me who will act for you? The facts have been explained to me.'

'Do you mean that the lieutenant wishes to force a quarrel upon me? I remember him now, of course; but I know of no insult, and certainly I have no quarrel with him.'

The captain raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders.

'Shall I say, then, that you prefer to apologise?' he asked, superciliously.

'Certainly not,' I returned sharply, stung by his manner. 'What I mean is that nothing passed which need make another encounter between us necessary.'

'That is an *impasse*.'

'I cannot help that,' said I, indifferently.

'Well, you must either fight, sir, or refuse to fight; and in the latter case the lieutenant says he will be driven to the extreme course of publicly insulting you.'

'This is monstrous,' I answered angrily. 'It is nothing less than forcing a quarrel upon me, as I say. But if that is the lieutenant's mood, and he wishes for another lesson in swordsmanship, I'll give it him. I have but very few friends here in Sofia, but the matter shall be arranged without delay. Perhaps——' I looked across at Spernow.

'Can I be of any assistance, Count?' he said, eagerly.

'I shall be deeply obliged if you will. Perhaps these gentlemen will retire to another room for a few minutes, and then you

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can wait on them, and matters can be put in course before they leave the hotel.'

They went, and I explained all that was necessary to Spernow, telling him that I attached little importance to the affair, and that I had already proved myself much more than a match for the lieutenant with the sword; that as the challenged party I should choose swords; but that the conditions were to be made as little stringent as possible, so that the fight could be stopped as soon as either was wounded, however slightly.

He went away then, and when he returned said that he had made all arrangements, and that we were to meet early the next morning at a spot just outside the town, often used for the purpose.

'Mademoiselle Broumoff will take a keen interest in this business, Count,' he said, as he was leaving me later. 'Lieutenant Ristich is an object of her deepest hatred; and so will the Princess for the matter of that. He is no favourite of hers either.'

'You will say nothing, of course, until it is over; and you will get a friend to act with you, and perhaps you will both breakfast with me afterwards.'

'With pleasure. You take it coolly, Count,' he said as we shook hands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DUEL, AND AFTER.

It was a glorious morning, the air crisp, fresh, and clear, when I rose early, and found Spernow waiting for me in the courtyard of the hotel. He introduced his friend, Captain Zoiloff, who would act as my other second in the duel.

'I got Zoiloff to come because he's well up in these matters,' said Spernow, 'and I'm not. He'll keep us right.'

I did not take the affair of the duel seriously; my bout with Ristich at the General's house had shown me my greater skill, and I had no intention of even wounding him seriously, and no fear whatever that he would be able to touch me. I said as much to my companions as we walked together to the ground.

'Ristich is very mad against you for some reason or other,' said Spernow. 'And he's a hare-brained chap, so I should look out.'

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'He is not much of a swordsman,' put in Zoiloff, 'but he has one or two clever strokes that have served him well enough in other affairs of this kind;' and he went on to describe them. But he found me a somewhat inattentive listener, and after a short time the talk turned to other matters.

We were first on the ground, and Captain Zoiloff promptly set to work to choose the most suitable spot, and the positions which we should respectively take up. He displayed a manifest relish for the task, and was evidently an old campaigner in this sort of thing.

He had scarcely concluded his work when the other party arrived, bringing with them a doctor. They saluted us formally, and without any delay the seconds consulted together, decided upon the ground, and selected the weapons.

While they were thus engaged Ristich and I stood apart, and I saw that he was very pale and moody-looking, glancing every now and again at me with patent ill-feeling and animosity.

'Ristich has got his marching orders,' said Spernow to me, when he and Zoiloff came to explain what they had arranged.

'How do you mean?'

'He is being sent back to Russia, and leaves to-day.'

'I heard him declare he wanted to go,' said I.

'Yes, but not in semi-disgrace. He puts it down to you, and that's what makes him so bitter. They tell me he raged like a fiend when he heard it last night, and he means mischief.'

I glanced across at him. He had thrown off his uniform, and I saw, too, that his sword-arm was bandaged. Till that moment I had forgotten all about the wound I had inflicted.

'Stay a moment,' I cried to my seconds. 'He is wounded. I can't fight a disabled man,' and I told them what had occurred.

'That's his look-out,' said Zoiloff, in a very business-like tone. 'He is the challenger.'

'I won't fight a cripple,' I said resolutely; and at that they called the other seconds aside, and a long conference ensued, in the course of which Ristich was more than once consulted. I saw him explaining matters to his seconds, and flourishing one of the rapiers to show that he could use it quite well.

'He insists that the fight must go on,' said Zoiloff on his return to me, 'and I really don't see that you can object.'

'But it isn't fair,' I protested. 'Under ordinary circumstances, and with the full use of his arm, the man isn't my equal with the sword, and, disabled in that way, the thing's absurd.'

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'His point is that he has to leave Sofia, and that, as he is determined to fight you, he will have no other chance. I shouldn't insist, Count Benderoff, if I were in your place. It will only cause talk. The doctor has examined the wound and says Ristich is fit to fight, and he has shown us, as you may have seen, that he has complete command of his sword.'

'It makes me appear ridiculous to fight a wounded man,' I urged. 'Try further protest, and say I will meet him anywhere at any time when he is well again. I will travel to Russia if necessary.'

'I am afraid that we shall only get some sneering reply that you don't want to fight, or something of that sort.'

'I would rather be sneered at for not fighting a wounded man than fight one,' said I. 'I will take care of my reputation.' And they went across to repeat the protest and deliver the message.

It was as fruitless as the former one, and when Zoiloff returned he was very angry.

'I will not repeat his message,' he said; 'but it was most insulting. You must fight, Count. If we have any more conferences we shall only have more duels. I think you have acted most honourably; but, believe me, you can only press this further at great risk to your name.'

He spoke so earnestly, and Spernow joined with him, that I allowed myself to be persuaded, and threw off my coat and waistcoat and made ready.

We took up our positions under the shadow of some trees, and when my opponent was close to me the look of hate in his eyes, as they rested on mine, confirmed what Spernow had told me of his intention and desire to do his worst.

But from the moment when our blades crossed and the word was given us to engage, I knew that the issue must rest with me. Ristich attacked me immediately with great violence and impetuosity, in the hope of finishing the matter before his weakened strength should give out. I had no difficulty in defending myself, however, and, had I been in the same vengeful mood as he was, I could have run him through.

My object was not that. I wished merely to wound him slightly, or disarm him; and I tried two or three times to do the latter, though without success. I fought as coolly and warily as if we were in the school trying a bout with the foils, and this coolness aggravated my opponent intensely, so that he lost all self-control.

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Watching patiently for my opportunity, I found it when he had made one of his reckless, angry thrusts, and with a quick counter I drove the point of my sword into his shoulder. Then I drew back instantly and threw up my weapon off the guard. Whether he saw this or not, or whether his rage blinded him to his wound and to all else besides, I know not, but instantly he thrust out his weapon with a blow aimed straight at my heart.

I saved myself only by springing back, while a shout of indignation came from Zoiloff.

'A foul stroke; I call you to witness, gentlemen, a foul and dastardly stroke,' he cried, excitedly, as he rushed in and struck up my opponent's sword. 'Count Benderoff has behaved splendidly, and if your sword had gone home, Lieutenant Ristich, it would have been murder. A most foul stroke.'

In a moment he was the centre of a group, all as excited as himself. Ristich protested that he had not seen me draw back from the fight, that he had not felt that he was wounded, and that he was eager to continue the fight. But Zoiloff would not hear of it.

'I withdraw my man, certainly,' I heard him say, and he brought matters to a dramatic conclusion. 'I declare the stroke a foul one, foully dealt, and if anyone questions that, I am ready to make good my words now and here;' and he singled out Captain Dimitrieff and addressed him pointedly: 'What say you, Captain?'

He looked very dangerous as he paused for an answer, and the Captain clearly had no wish for a quarrel with him.

'Of course, the fight is over,' he answered, evasively.

'Exactly, and we'll leave it at that,' said Zoiloff, drily, as he turned on his heel and came to me with Spernow. 'I never saw a more dastardly thing. I wouldn't have believed even a Russian would have done such a thing.' A speech that set me wondering.

'They won't cross Zoiloff,' whispered Spernow to me as I was dressing, rapidly. 'He's a demon at the business. I'm glad I brought him.'

'What did he mean about "even a Russian"?' I asked.

'He hates 'em as much as I do. I'll tell you another time,' replied Spernow.

'I congratulate you, Count Benderoff, on a lucky escape. That man meant to murder you; and Dimitrieff ought to be ashamed of himself for not speaking out plainly. But they hang together in a way that's disgusting, these——' He checked himself sud-

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denly, with a quick glance at me, as though he had said more than enough before a stranger.

'I hope he really did not know I was not on guard,' I answered.

'I'm afraid it's a hope not much stouter than a spider's web;' and he laughed bitterly. 'The man meant murder, and was mad when he saw you could hold him so easily. You use the sword like a master, Count—I should like to try the foils with you.'

'Nothing would please me better than a few hints from you,' said I, readily. 'I am a good deal out of practice.'

'Then I shouldn't care to play with you in earnest when you are in practice,' was his deftly flattering reply. 'If we are to quarrel, I'd better pray for it to be soon;' and his taciturn face broke into a smile.

'It's something to earn Zoiloff's praise in these things, Count,' said Spernow, laughing. 'He's generally as chary of it as a coy woman of her kisses.'

'You are both breakfasting with me, I hope,' I said, as we moved off the ground. 'Then we can go round to the house I am getting ready, and, if you like, I can have my first lesson in the shooting gallery which I am having fitted up there.'

'Nothing would give me greater pleasure; but unfortunately, as I told Spernow, I have an engagement which I cannot break,' said Zoiloff. 'But I can be with you in about a couple of hours from now, and then I shall be at your service. I should like nothing better than to see your gallery.' And we arranged it so.

While we were at breakfast I asked Spernow to tell me, as he had promised, how it was that so much hatred of the Russians existed among the very men who were on their side. Such a fact, if it were one, might have considerable influence upon me.

'I am the worst hand in the world at explaining things,' he answered. 'But it is quite true. We don't trust them, but we trust each other less, Count; that's about the size of it, I think. We must have some kind of steady leadership, and what is there here? Look at the men who are at the head of things, and what are they except a crowd of nobodies, risen from nowhere, and setting their course solely by the compass of self-interest? The needle points always in that direction, and all the rest goes running round it.'

'But why trust Russia?'

'Why not? So far as we can see, the one steady influence in this country is directed by her. We hate Russia, but we

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are afraid of her; and where else can we look for any hope of help?'

'The Prince,' I suggested.

'He is as powerless as his poorest subject, and he has round him a crew that are after nothing but their own personal ends. They yell about patriotism and independence and all the rest of it, but would sell themselves to-morrow to the highest bidder. They only don't sell themselves, because nobody thinks them worth buying. The only real power is wielded by Russia, and I suppose we think it's better to make friends in advance with what must be the controlling hand in the country. It's not a very high game, is it?—but where's a better? Men like Zoiloff would only too gladly jump at a chance of something better.'

'And the Princess Christina?'

'Ah!' And his face lighted with enthusiasm. 'We do all but worship her, not only for herself, but because we have come to believe she will in some way do what we want to see done—draw out the best that lies in Bulgarian life. She is truth itself, and right, justice, and honour are the cardinal articles of her faith.'

I looked at him in surprise and began to see there was more in him than I had at first thought.

'You think more seriously of these matters than I had believed,' I said.

'I?' and he laughed. 'Ah, it does not do for us Bulgarians to let the Russians believe we take either our affairs or ourselves too earnestly. But some of us are sound enough in heart at least. Enough of politics, however; why should I bore you with them?' And he turned away to lighter topics, rattling off a dozen stories of the latest gossip and tittle-tattle about the society of the city.

I did not check him, for it struck me that he was anxious rather that I should retain my first impressions of him than begin to look on him as taking a serious interest in the affairs of the country.

After breakfast we went round to my house and I showed him the alterations I had made. He took the keenest interest in everything, declaring that my wealth would make me at once an important figure in Sofia, and that in a few weeks I should have half the city flocking to my doors.

When Zoiloff came we went to the shooting gallery, and both the men were vastly interested in everything I had done. I had had the place fitted as a gymnasium, with every kind of appliance that money could provide; many of them sent specially from England.

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'I did not know that you Roumanians cared for these things at all,' said Zoiloff. 'I have not done you justice.'

'I am half an Englishman,' I answered, purposely—for I had begun to alter radically the original part for which I had cast myself. If I was to stay in Sofia, I felt that I must wrap round me the protection which that magic formula, British subject, alone could give. The announcement surprised them both.

'Ah, that accounts for it,' exclaimed Zoiloff. 'You English are a wonderful people. But why do you come to Sofia? Pardon me, I have no right to put such a question,' he added hastily.

'I am also half a Roumanian; and the freedom of Bulgaria is essential for the independence of that country.'

I turned away as I spoke, and pretended not to notice the swift, shrewd look which both men turned upon me.

'I shall hope to know much more of you, Count Benderoff,' said Zoiloff, with so much earnestness that I thought my words had touched the cord in him I intended.

'I think it is my turn to be surprised in you,' said Spernow. 'And I hope that we three may come to understand each other well.'

Were these invitations from them both to speak more openly? I thought so, but felt that for the present I had said enough.

'Shall we try the foils?' I asked.

'With pleasure,' agreed Zoiloff; and while he was making ready he glanced round the spacious gallery and added: 'What a magnificent hall you have here; there is room to drill half a company of soldiers, as well as train a band of athletes!'

'Yes,' I answered with a laugh. 'It would be a fine house for a revolutionary movement.' And at this they both started, and again shot shrewd, searching glances at me; but I was busy selecting the foils.

'You English are a wonderful people,' said Zoiloff again, but this time very drily.

We set to work then with our fencing, and to my surprise, and much to Zoiloff's admiration, I proved slightly the better swordsman. He had not a spark of jealousy or envy in his composition, and when I had beaten him for the third or fourth bout in succession, he only laughed and said:

'I am your first recruit, Count; and you are a master I am well content to work from—and follow.'

'Good,' exclaimed Spernow, 'I will be the second—if you will have me, Count.'

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'My dear Spernow, I could wish no better friends or comrades in any work than you two.' At this answer, Zoiloff, taciturn and reserved though he was by nature, offered me his hand impulsively, and said with great earnestness, as I took it:

'Now I am sure we understand each other, and shall work together for the same cause, Count;' and the warmth of his hand-grip told me that in him I should have a firm friend.

Spernow was not nearly so skilful a swordsman, and knew it; but he was anxious to learn, and we arranged that we three should make a rule of meeting daily for such practice; and when we were separating I said:

'As you can see, I take a great interest in these things, and I should like you to do me the favour of bringing with you such friends of yours as you think would like to come and would help us by taking an interest in the work here.'

Zoiloff's dark eyes lighted meaningly as they held mine.

'You would soon have a large circle of friends, Count.'

'Every friend of Bulgaria would be a friend of mine,' I answered.

'You mean all that that implies?'

'I mean all that that implies; and the wider interpretation you give to it the better I shall be pleased.'

'It should be a day of good omen for the country when your house is thrown open for that purpose. A party of really patriotic Bulgarians is no mere dream-project—though they will be young men, mostly. By Heavens, but I am glad Spernow induced me to go out with you this morning.'

When they had gone, I stayed to think over all the chances which this unexpected turn of matters suggested. It might yet be checkmate indeed to Russian plans, if we could find the means to form such a party of young ardent patriots from within the very ranks of those supposed to be devoted to Russian interests. There were possibilities calculated to satisfy the wildest ambitions and effect the most drastic changes.

It would be a perilous task enough at the outset, for I could not doubt that, should the project get wind, as was most probable in that land of spies and treachery, General Kolfort would spare no efforts and stop at no measures to crush it under the wheels of his enormous power.

But it was worth the effort. To me it was infinitely more welcome than any secret counter-mining intrigue, such as I had had in contemplation. It would be a real sturdy stroke in the cause of

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freedom, and, if once successful, no man could tell how far or wide or deep its glorious effects might not be felt.

It roused me till the blood coursed quickly through my veins and my pulse beat with feverish throbs, for in it I saw the real interest and honour of the Princess Christina herself. The men who had been with me were both pledged to the eyelids to serve her, I knew; and I knew further that every man they brought to the house to join us would have the same enthusiasm in her behalf. Who could tell but that by these means I might yet be the agent to place her on the throne, but without the hampering restrictions of any Russian marriage?

This thought was whirling in my head as I walked back to my hotel, there to receive another startling surprise.

Some one was waiting to see me, had been waiting for two hours, on important business.

'I am Major Grueff, and am the bearer of a letter to Count Benderoff, of Radova. Have I the pleasure of speaking to him?'

'Yes, what is it?' I asked, concealing my surprise.

'His Highness has given you a captain's commission in the Sofia Regiment, Count, of which I am the major in command, and has requested me to carry back your answer to this letter.'

I opened it and found it a request that I should wait upon the Prince on the following day.

There was no doubt as to the meaning of this. It was the Countess Bokara's work; and as I penned my reply, that I should gladly accept his command, I called to mind her declaration that our next meeting would be at the Prince's palace.

'I am glad to welcome you to the regiment, Count,' said the major; but he spoke in a tone I did not like, and I conceived an instinctive but invincible prejudice against him. 'And, as I have been so long waiting, I will get you to excuse my hurrying away.'

I did not attempt to stay him; for I wished to be alone to think over this new development.

If I accepted the captaincy, what could it mean except that I committed myself to the Prince's side? And this at the very moment when the other and vastly more congenial plan had begun to take shape in my mind.

I thought I could see again the alluring but cruel face of the Countess Bokara, and hear the ring of triumph in her voice as she had turned to me after her cold-blooded deed:

'Now you will have to join us?'

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CHAPTER VII.

AT THE BALL.

THE ball that night was a very brilliant affair, and when I arrived the rooms were already somewhat crowded. I found Spernow waiting for me near the entrance.

'You are a little late, Count; we began to fear that perhaps you were not coming. Mademoiselle Broumoff is anxious for me to present you at once. Will you come with me?'

As we threaded our way through the throng, he told me the names of many of those present, but I was looking everywhere for the Princess, and felt disappointed at not seeing her.

Mademoiselle Broumoff was sitting alone in a corner at the far end, and I saw her eyes light up as she caught sight of us. She was not pretty, but her face was bright and clever, with an ever-changing play of expression that made it very attractive; while a pair of deeply set thoughtful eyes spoke of great intelligence.

As soon as I had been presented, she made a place for me at her side and sent Spernow away with a reminder that he had a number of duty dances with important partners.

'You have kept him from them so long, Count, that he will have a busy time,' she said with a smile.

'I have kept him? I have but this minute arrived.'

'Of course, that is the reason. I had commissioned him to bring you straight to me, and you are late.'

'I did not know that such an honour was depending on my arrival, or I would have been earlier,' I said with a bow.

'I have been most anxious, and half feared you meant to disappoint us;' and in a light strain we chatted pleasantly. I soon perceived that my companion was bent upon creating a favourable impression, while on my side I was not less desirous of making a friend of one who was so close an intimate of the Princess. We danced the next waltz together, and at the close of it she asked me to lead her to one of the conservatories.

I observed that she was careful to select a quiet corner, where we could speak without fear of being overheard, and after a moment's pause she said earnestly:

'I have been really anxious to know you, Count.'

'I am flattered,' I answered.

'No, not that,' she replied impulsively, with a slight shake of

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the head. 'I mean more than that. Michel has told me all that has passed between you—especially this morning at your new house. Captain Zoiloff is a man to trust implicitly, you know that?'

'I formed that opinion strongly,' I said, beginning to wonder what she was going to say.

'Michel tells me you are half English. Is that a secret?'

'No, certainly not. We English are not afraid to own our nationality, as the actions of many of us show too prominently sometimes, I fear.'

'But Englishmen of wealth do not commonly choose Bulgaria as a place of residence—at least not without some strong motive.' And her eyes searched my face for the truth.

'Eccentricity has never yet been denied to us.'

'Is it in your case eccentricity—only?'

'I am also half a Roumanian,' I said, repeating the answer I had given in the morning to Zoiloff.

'And the Roumanians are all but Russians.'

'Is not the Princess Christina a Roumanian?' I retorted. 'And also of the Russian party here?'

'Do you think that?' she asked quickly, turning the battery of her eyes full on me again.

'What time or means have I had to learn how to distinguish between appearances and facts?'

She laughed—a very silvery, sweet laugh.

'You fence as cleverly with your tongue as with your sword, Count. What do you want to know?'

'Nothing that cannot be told me voluntarily, mademoiselle.'

'Why do we all trust you instinctively?' she asked. A quite feminine thrust.

'I am happy if you do,' I parried; and at the reply she shrugged her shoulders, and a shadow of impatience crossed her expressive face.

There was a pause, in which she looked down and played with her fan.

'We wish to trust you entirely,' she said next, in a low, earnest voice. 'The Princess wishes it.' A swift glance shot up to notice the effect of this.

'I have no more earnest wish in life than to serve the Princess,' I declared, the words coming from my heart.

'To serve her is to serve the cause of freedom and the cause of Bulgaria.'

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'Freedom as the Russians interpret it?'

'Freedom as the English love it,' she answered, in a tone that vibrated with enthusiasm, her eyes flashing and her cheeks colouring. 'The freedom that we true Bulgarians read and dream of, crave and would die for,' she added, her voice deep and low with feeling.

A long pause followed, in which my thoughts were busy. Had the Princess Christina inspired this feeling, and was this strange girl an agent in pressing me to join such a movement? My heart beat fast at the thought.

'Is that a cause you would serve, Count?' she asked.

'These are strange things to hear from those whom I find all gathered under the wings of the Russian Eagle!' I said cautiously.

'There may be stranger yet to hear,' she returned sharply.

'The Prince who is on your throne is no friend of Russia.'

'The Prince has never gained the confidence of true Bulgarians. The men he keeps about him are patriots in nothing but name; and he has neither the wit to winnow the false from the true, nor the courage to set the false at defiance.'

'You would play for a big stake?'

'And make our lives the counters. Is not that enough?' The retort was given with a show of bitterness. 'You English are cold and calculating.'

'We are cautious, certainly.'

'Yet you should hate the Russians.'

'No one has accused us of loving them.'

She made another pause before replying:

'Perhaps I have been too rash and have surprised you; but we thought from what Michel told me of what passed this morning at your house, that—well, that all was as we wished, and that you were already with us.'

'You thought this?' I asked, purposely putting an emphasis on the pronoun. She understood me and smiled.

'The Princess and I both thought it,' and I heard this with delight.

'You did not hear more than the truth, mademoiselle.'

'Then we are to be friends in it all?' she cried; and her face was radiant with pleasure as she turned her eyes once more full upon me.

'Show me how I can serve the Princess, and I will do it with my whole heart, and if need be with my life.'

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'She will be here to-night, and you can tell her. The news will have the pleasanter savour coming direct from you.'

She knew how to fire me, and I would have given half my fortune to have known what lay behind the meaning glance of her eyes, which started thoughts I would not silence, and yet dared not indulge.

As I sat there, half bewildered, I saw a tall, fair, truculent-looking man forcing his way arrogantly among the people and coming in our direction, while he looked about him on all sides in search of some one.

'Who is that?' I asked.

'A man to fear, Count—the worst enemy we have. Duke Sergius. A man whose eyes we have always to blind.'

At that moment he caught sight of my companion and he hurried his pace, a heavy frown darkening his sensual, insolent features.

'I have had much trouble in finding you, mademoiselle. I might almost have thought you were trying to avoid me. The waltz we were to dance together has commenced.'

Mademoiselle Broumoff smiled ingenuously at him and said:

'I scarcely thought you were in earnest when you put my name on your programme. You do not generally honour me by remembering it.'

'I have something particular to ask you,' he replied, with such selfish insolence that I could have kicked him. He caught something of this expression in my face as he looked casually at me, and his glance deepened into a steady stare as he tried to frown me down. But I returned his look with one in which I tried to convey some of the dislike and contempt I felt at his attitude, and, perceiving it, mademoiselle rose hastily, put herself between us, and drew his attention by placing her hand on his arm and saying, as she bowed to me:

'I am ready now.'

As they moved off I heard him ask who I was, but could not catch the reply.

I hated the look of the man, and tried to persuade myself that the feeling was not in any way prompted by what I knew about his design upon the Princess Christina. If I had before needed any inducement to drive me into opposition to him, my hasty prejudice would have supplied it; and I sat now absorbed in thought, chewing the cud of all that had passed between the Princess's staunch little emissary and myself, and wishing for the

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hour and the means to thwart him. They would come, I felt, and I nursed my anger and fed my animosity as I sat there piecing together the threads of the net that was closing round me, and drawing me forward upon a path that would lead I could not say whither.

Spernow's voice roused me.

'You are not dancing, Count. Won't you let me find you some partners? There are plenty here who wish to know you. Well, have you and Nathalie had an interesting conversation?' he asked in a lower voice, dropping into the seat at my side. 'I know how anxious she was for it.'

'I hope great things from it,' I answered.

'Are you to be presented to the Princess?'

I looked at him in surprise, not understanding the question.

'Oh, the presentation was to hinge upon the result of your talk with her.'

'Then probably I shall be presented,' I returned, smiling.

'Good, very good; nothing could be better, indeed. Come, then, and let us go in search of partners. But don't fill up your card, you may need a gap or two in it presently.' I guessed his meaning, but said nothing as I went with him back to the dancing hall, was introduced to several people, and for an hour danced and chatted as though I had no other object in life.

I was not too much engrossed by my partners, however, to miss the entrance of the Princess Christina, and more than once when I passed close to her in the course of a dance I caught her gaze fixed upon me with evident interest. Once especially was I certain of this, when she and Mademoiselle Broumoff were in close and earnest conversation; and it was with a thrill of pleasure that I felt that I was the subject of their talk.

Soon after this Spernow came to me and said that the Princess was anxious that I should be presented to her; and with a fast-quickening pulse I went with him to where she and her companion were sitting.

Almost directly I had made my bow Mademoiselle Broumoff rose and said to Spernow:

'This is our dance, Michel,' and as the pair went away I took her place by the side of the beautiful woman who exercised so overpowering a fascination upon me.

'A more conventional meeting than our first, Count,' she said.

'A very brilliant scene,' I replied naïvely; for now that I was alone with her I felt like a tongue-tied clown. My stupid answer

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surprised her, as well it might, and I saw a look of perplexity cross her face. After an awkward pause, I added: 'Your coming then saved my life.'

'Scarcely that; but I have since heard the particulars of that matter, and I have been ashamed that you should have suffered such treatment in my name. I am glad of an opportunity of assuring you of my regret.'

'I would gladly suffer much worse on your behalf,' I blurted out nervously, and the answer brought another pause, during which I struggled hard to overcome my embarrassment and self-consciousness. I desired above all things in the world to win the favour of my companion, and yet I sat like a fool, at a loss for the mere commonplaces of conversation. She would think me a dolt or an idiot.

How long my stupid silence would have lasted I cannot tell; but the Princess in a movement of her fan dropped her dance card, and in returning it to her I looked up, and caught her eyes upon me lighted with a rare smile.

'Do you return it to me without your name upon it?' she asked.

'May I have the honour?' I murmured.

'What is a ball for, but dancing?' she smiled. 'But if you write your name there it will be a sign and token.'

'Of what?' I asked stupidly.

'Of much that my dear little friend Mademoiselle Broumoff tells me she has said to you to-night.'

'What is a ball for, but dancing?' I repeated her words as I took the card and wrote my initials against a waltz. 'It will make the dance memorable to me,' I added, under my breath.

'I shall read it for one thing as a token that you have acquitted me of all responsibility for the scene at General Kolfort's house.'

'There was no need for any token of that, Princess,' I replied, beginning to shake off my paralysing nervousness.

'And of the rest?'

'That I desire nothing better than to be enrolled among your friends.' I spoke from my heart then, and the words pleased her.

'There may be many dangers, and more difficulties.'

'I am prepared for both—if I can serve you.' I looked straight at her for the first time, and her eyes fell.

'I could have no more welcome friend,' she said softly.

This time the pause that followed was due as much to her embarrassment as to mine, and I noted this with a touch of delight.

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'You had a long conference with General Kolfort?' she asked, a minute later.

'Yes; he threatened me with all the power of his enmity if I did not decide to ally myself on his side, and gave me a week in which to do so or leave the country.'

'And your decision?' she asked quickly.

'Has been made to-night.'

'To do what?'

'To devote myself without reserve to your interests.'

'I am glad—and proud.'

No answer that she could have made could have filled me with more supreme pleasure.

'I had feared a quite different result from news which reached me to-day. You know your affairs are pretty freely discussed just now.'

'What news was that?'

'I heard that you had received a captain's commission in the Prince's own household regiment. Is that so?'

'It was unsolicited by me; and I learnt it only to-day. I have not yet accepted it. I am to see His Highness to-morrow.'

'You will find him a good man, but sorely distracted by doubts and fears. All willing to serve Bulgaria; but afraid of Russian influence, and unable to choose good advisers here. His nerves have been shaken by the plots against his life, and his judgment shattered till he cannot appraise the men about him. Were matters different he would be an ideal ruler for us.'

'And what of the other influences round him?' I asked guardedly; but she understood me and replied openly:

'You mean the woman whose life you saved. I cannot understand her. Her ruling passion seems to be her hate of me. And a woman with a passion, be it jealousy, hate, or love, is no safe guide.' I detected a note of sadness in her tone. 'You ran a great risk that night, Count, a fearful risk.'

'There was little danger that I saw.'

'I do not mean the seen danger; that may have been small for a man whose bravery and skill with weapons are such as yours. But the unseen dangers—the consequences that may always pursue and overtake you when you least think of them. It is such terrible deeds as that which fill me with dismay and dread of the future. How can a cause hope to prosper, the foundations of which are secret murder, implacable violence, and such desperate bloodshed? And these things are done in my name, and

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apparently with my sanction. Did not General Kolfort threaten you with the consequences of your act?'

'Yes, but I do not take his threats too seriously. It is one thing to assassinate a Bulgarian woman, another to murder a British subject.'

'When you have been longer in this distracted country you will see the distinction differently. But we must talk no longer in this strain here. Too many eyes are upon us and too many ears open. Balls are for dancing, Count,' she added in a light tone and with a smile.

I understood that I was dismissed, and rose and walked away. I was in no mood for dancing, and I went into one of the conservatories to think over what had passed between us, and remained there until it was time to claim her for the waltz she had promised me.

We danced it almost in silence, save for a commonplace or two about the ball and the people present; but at the close she said earnestly:

'I am leaving almost directly. I shall be at home to-morrow afternoon, and shall be interested to know your impressions of the Prince.' Then in a lower voice: 'You must be careful, Count. Accept the commission in the regiment; but do not pledge yourself to His Highness's service. You will not find it necessary. Maintain as strict a neutrality as possible; and then see General Kolfort and tell him what you are doing. It might be well to see him before you go to the Palace. Emphasise the fact of your British nationality. You have a difficult part to play; how difficult you do not yet see, perhaps. But your success and your safety will always be of the deepest concern to me. Remember that, always.'

She spoke earnestly, and in her eyes, as I glanced into them, I saw again that look of solicitude which at our previous meeting had moved me so strangely.

And the sweetness of her voice, the touch of her hand, and the tender softness of her glance, were haunting me all through the night, and urging me to I know not what strenuous efforts in her behalf.

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CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE PALACE.

THE next morning I was up early and went for a long ride. It was likely to be a critical day for me, and I had to try and look well ahead to see where I was being carried by the new set of the tide in my affairs.

My conversation with the Princess Christina had had a great effect upon me. For one thing it had made me more resolved than ever to devote myself to her, whatever might be the consequences; but her words of warning, her evident belief that there was danger for me, and above all her pleasure at my declaration of loyalty to her, had roused all my instincts of caution, while they had strengthened my feelings towards her.

She was shrewd, clear-cut in her views of men and things, devoted to the cause of Bulgaria, and openly allied to the Russian party, whose rough and violent methods she had nevertheless so indignantly decried. What then was her object? Was she playing the doubly hazardous game of attempting to use the Russian influence and power for an end opposed to theirs?

That was the only solution I could see. And it was one which I knew must involve her in a course fraught with such peril, that only a woman of iron nerve and implacable will could contemplate it without fear. And yet she was brave enough to take such a course without, so far as I knew, a single man trained in statecraft and intrigue to help her. Could I take such a *rôle*? The mere thought of the possibility filled me with enthusiasm not unmixed with much embarrassment.

If my surmise was right, I felt that her scheme was just that which our Foreign Office would do their utmost to assist; and, in helping her to gain the throne on such terms, I should be fulfilling in the best possible way the object of my presence in the country. But I knew, too, that open help from the British Government was impossible. That had been made unmistakably plain to me, and I must make it equally clear to her. Her advice to make the most of my British nationality might have been prompted by a belief that our Government would help her, and I must show her the groundlessness of any such hope.

At the same time, the course she had indicated agreed best with my own views: to maintain an open neutrality between the

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contending sections while devoting myself to her interests. Her whole object must be put fully before me, however; and I resolved to speak very frankly that afternoon. The prospect of the close association with her was infinitely alluring, and it required more than a single effort to drag my thoughts away from dwelling upon this to the more practical consideration of other matters. To secure that friendship I would willingly venture all that I had in the world; and I had but to think of it for my heart to be thrilled and my senses dazzled.

But what of the Duke Sergius and the story of the secret betrothal? The man was a selfish, sensual brute, as I had seen for myself. Was it possible that she would even go to the length of sacrificing herself in a marriage with such a man to secure her end? Then I recalled a sentence of Mademoiselle Broumoff's: 'A man whose eyes we have always to blind;' and I repeated it over and over again, till at last I grew to read it by the light of my own wild, vague thoughts and hopes—that there was no betrothal, but that the pretended agreement to it was a part of the subtler plot which my Princess was weaving. The thought of such a betrothal was maddening to me, and I worked myself up until I thought I would rather pick a quarrel with him and run him through the heart than see her condemned to be the wife of such a brute.

I was cooler, however, when I returned to my hotel, and my wits were clear and wary enough as I set out for General Kolfort's house. I was well received, but he made haste to show me that he knew already of the fact of my captain's commission.

'I am glad to see you, Count Benderoff—or shall I say Captain?'

'Choose your own form of salutation, General. It was of that matter I came to see you,' I returned.

'Is that all?'

'All?' I asked, as if in astonishment.

'Do you accept the commission in the service of the Prince—or rather of the lady who has offered it you—or in mine?'

'In neither; but as an honour offered to a rich British subject who has taken up permanent residence in Sofia.' His shrewd old eyes lighted at this reply, which he had certainly not expected.

'So that is your line, eh?' he said drily. 'Considering that they know nothing of the Hon. Mr. Winthrop's existence, they have acted a little by accident in honouring a British subject. Don't you think so?'

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I smiled. 'At any rate, they have made me the offer, and I have decided to accept it. But I preferred to come and tell you, after our interesting little conversation of three days ago.'

'That means, then, you will remain in Sofia?'

'My house is nearly ready for my occupation, and I shall hope to be honoured by your presence in it as my guest.'

'Umph! You have not forgotten our conversation, I see.'

'It was scarcely one to be forgotten.'

'And I understand you claim the rights of a British subject.'

'I am half a Roumanian, General, with considerable possessions there,' I returned, equivocally.

'You are a very ambitious, or a very reckless, or a very clever young man, Count. You have thought over your course well?'

'I am not given to act on impulse.'

'Yet cleverer men than you have tried unsuccessfully the dangerous policy of attempting to ride on two horses at once.'

'I can but fail,' I answered, indifferently.

'Then you decline to enrol yourself in my service?'

'I neither decline nor accept, General.' The reply was unwelcome, and he sat a moment with brows knitted.

'You will fail, sir, as certainly as you make the attempt. But I must know, in view of future possibilities, whether you claim the status of a British subject or that of a Roumanian Count, or whether, again, I am to regard you merely as a captain in a Bulgarian regiment.'

'I shall be in the unique position of enjoying all three,' said I, and noticed with some amusement the effect of this answer; and then added with a laugh, and in a light tone: 'I don't expect you to take me too seriously, General Kolfort.'

'If you are a British subject, I can ask your Government to recall you; if a Roumanian Count, I can use other influence to deal with you; while, if you are merely a Bulgarian officer, you will be responsible to me for the deed which you have already committed.' His tone was tense, concentrated, and full of earnestness. 'Understand me; I do not alter. If you will not join me, you shall not stay in Bulgaria. I am not to be trifled with.'

'I can appreciate that, for you have already had my correspondence tampered with, in order to prevent certain news reaching England. I have committed no act for which I am not quite prepared to answer—openly; and all I demand is that fair play which we English claim as the right of all—whether English, Roumanian, or Bulgarian.'

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He listened to this with a grim smile on his hard face.

'You mean that you are ready to risk breaking yourself on the wheel. Very well; I confess I looked for a somewhat different decision, judging by what has passed in the last two days—your conversations with various people; but remember, and, indeed, you are not likely to forget, what I have told you is my firm resolve. If you stay, you must join us.'

I left him then, feeling that I had created pretty much the impression I desired—that, in dealing with me, he would have to regard me as a British subject; and that, coupled with the fact of my increasingly close relations with the Princess and those about her, would suffice to secure my safety for a time.

With the reigning Prince I was at a loss what line to take. It was difficult to decide beforehand; but I was resolved to go to the length of refusing the captaincy in the regiment if the conditions attached to its acceptance were in any way embarrassing to my freedom.

But my interview with him was a surprise to me.

He received me alone, and spoke with a freedom I had not expected, giving as the reason for his attitude my rescue of the Countess Bokara; and when I told him as I did, for there was now no longer any reason for concealing the fact, that I was an Englishman, his frankness increased. He jumped to the conclusion that I had some sort of credentials from the British Government, and it was only with difficulty that I disabused him of the idea.

He had the most engaging personality of any man I ever met. He was strikingly handsome; every movement was marked by a courtly but unstudied and natural grace; his voice was toned in perfect accord with his courteous and kindly bearing; and his manner so sympathetically receptive as to impress you with the conviction that all you said had the utmost interest and importance for him. A courtier to the finger-tips, and yet withal a prince, it was impossible not to be charmed with him. I might have been his most intimate friend instead of the merest stranger who had come to thank him for a favour just bestowed. There was something lacking, however—strength; and therein, without doubt, lay the secret of his failure.

'What reason can a wealthy Englishman have for settling in a place like this, unless he bears a commission of some kind?' he asked, while indulging his hope that I was indeed charged with the duty of aiding him.

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'Had I such a mission, your Highness, should I not have come straight to you?'

'I suppose so, but yet it seems strange. I suppose they know in England how matters are with me, and what must eventually happen if nothing is done.'

'All Europe knows of the difficulties of your position,' I answered diplomatically.

'And all Europe does nothing but look on with folded hands, leaving me helpless to kick against the pricks. Do they think I bear a charmed life to withstand for ever the plots against my life that are being daily formed, and that I can go on for ever avoiding the poison or the dagger or the bullet that my enemies have ever in readiness for me? Do they take me for a zealot so tired of living that I am willing to keep my life always on offer to the first hand daring and shrewd enough to take it? And all this for a freedom which they mouth about and will not help, and for a people who have been corrupted to hate me, though I have doubled their country, led them to victory, and saved them from overwhelming disasters. By Heaven! the ingratitude of this people is as colossal as their selfishness.'

I said nothing, and in a moment his bitterness passed, and he smiled.

'This is poor hearing for one who has come generously to offer me his services, and who has already placed me under a load of obligation. But at least I will be frank with you, Count Benderoff. I can give you this commission, give it gladly, and welcome you for what I believe you to be—an honourable man; but your services are of no use to me. They come too late—too late.'

'I do not understand your Highness.'

'It shall not be for want of plain dealing with you, then. The dear friend whose life you saved, and who has brought you to me, is urging—the impossible. She does not know it, or cannot realise it, or will not—what you will; but, mark me well, my days in this ungrateful country are numbered. You will not use the information I give you—but I have resolved to abdicate.'

'To abdicate?' I cried, for this was news indeed.

'Yes; to abdicate. That is my fixed and irrevocable resolve. Had you brought me the promise of help from England, I would stay and fight it out, and strive to realise those high hopes with which, under God, I declare I accepted the throne. But what can I do alone, or almost alone, against a people who plot and plan to depose or murder me, who have tired already of the puppet

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ruler which other Powers imposed upon them, and against the cursed canker of this Russian intrigue? In all the land I cannot now tell who is friend and who foe. In my very household the air reeks with conspiracy and intrigue. I know not whether any man I meet by chance may not be sent to do murder. I never lie down at night without wondering whether I shall see the next morning's sun. I never taste a meal without the thought of poison. I never speak a word without the expectation that it will be carried to the ears of my implacable and ruthless foes. And never a sun rises and sets again without I know that the deadly work of corruption has been carried a stage farther.'

'Such thoughts as these, your Highness, grow by brooding.'

'Good God! man, they are the natural germs with which this Eastern air is crowded and polluted. No, no; these are no idle fears. Russia is relentless, and I am powerless to resist her. I will not be her tool. I could stay in safety and in what the world calls pomp and honour, a great Prince, if I would but stoop to do her bidding. I will not; and therefore my choice to abdicate or die. Would God it could have been different!'

I was silent in the rush of thoughts these utterances roused.

'You will not tell the Countess Bokara this? It is my grief, the bitterest irony of all my position, that I am driven thus to mislead the one friend who has been staunch to me, the truest friend God ever gave to a disappointed man, a foiled and thwarted Prince. I have told you—it will, indeed, be public knowledge in a few weeks from now, and Europe will reap the crop which her vacillation has sown—that you may not be buoyed up with false hopes from this grant of the commission. It would be a Greek gift, indeed, did I not tell you the truth—that you have nothing to hope from it. I can guess, of course, what the result will be. You will be drawn to the Russian net. That is a vortex which sucks in everything.'

'What is that?'

I turned like a needle to the magnet as I heard the ringing tones of the Countess Bokara, who had entered the room unknown to us.

'Who will join the Russian party—you, Count Benderoff?' she cried eagerly, almost fiercely, as she came quickly forward. 'No. Prince, I will answer for him. He dare not,' she added.

'How much did you hear, Anna?' he asked rather uneasily.

'Enough to rouse my indignation, that was all,'

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'I was telling the Count that there is no hope to be gained in my service, and there is but one side here for a man of action.'

'Prince, Prince, why will you always damp the enthusiasm of those who would be your friends and adherents? Why this constant tone of depression? These everlasting fears and forebodings? There is no cause for them, Count. We are on the eve of a stroke that will change everything—everything—and foil these coward traitors and restore in all its former strength the Prince's influence. There is no monopoly of craft and guile in these Russians! A clear head, a strong hand, a loyal heart, and a daring sword, can change all. We are not so hopeless but that a clever *coup* can save our cause and make us once again all-powerful.'

The Prince threw up his hands with a gesture of weakness.

'It is too late,' he murmured, despondently. 'Too late.'

'It shall never be too late while I live,' she cried, desperately. 'It shall never be said that you were beaten by a woman. Force her from the path, by fair means or foul—and forced she shall be—and all the flimsy superstructure of this clumsy plot falls like a shattered dream. Never shall Bulgaria be crushed beneath that woman's heel while I have strength in my right arm, or there remains a knife or a bullet in all the land. I swear it.'

She uttered the vengeful words with all the vehement force of her violent temper, and as I looked at her I could see the thoughts of murder lighting her strained, glowing features, and brightly gleaming eyes.

But while they stirred repugnance in me they seemed only to add to the Prince's despondency.

'There has been too much blood shed already,' he said, in a tone of rebuke.

'Too much; ay, so much that one woman's life more will make no difference. So they thought when they planned that mine should be the life—and shall I be softer than they?'

The Prince looked at me with an expression I was quick to read, and I made a movement as if to leave.

'I shall see you again shortly, Count, and you will take up your military duties at your early convenience. Meanwhile, I depend upon your discretion. All that you have heard here is for yourself alone.'

'Absolutely. I understand,' I answered, and took my leave.

'You cannot go like this,' broke in the Countess. 'I have yet much to say to you. I need your advice and help.'

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'Madame, I have urgent matters that call for attention immediately,' I replied, and the Prince thanked me with a look.

'And are not these matters urgent?' she cried, indignantly.

'The Count has my permission to retire,' said the Prince, with sudden dignity.

'When do you return, sir?' asked the Countess. 'I must see you at once. I cannot brook delay. I am on fire when I think of all you must help me to achieve.'

'My duties will bring me here constantly;' and as I withdrew I could not decide whether my admiration of her courage and staunchness to the Prince or my loathing of the deadly methods by which she was prepared to prove it were the greater. Admirable as a friend, she was hateful as a woman; and as she watched me go she appeared like a beautiful dangerous fiend, till her face turned to the Prince and her eyes glowed with the intense love for him which was the inspiring passion of her strange, reckless nature.

(*To be continued.*)

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At the Sign of the Ship.

IT seems that of late I dropped some observations, in these pages, on what I have heard styled 'Body Snatching.' This technical phrase means the publication by A. of a book of which the copyright, the possession of B., has just expired. There is no infringement of law in such publication, but it runs counter, as I understand, to the unwritten tradition, or etiquette, of Paternosteria. Therefore I suggested to men of letters that they should not lend their pens to the adorning or elucidating of books published by A. immediately after the copyright has expired in the arms of B.

* * *

What I said has been censured by 'C. K. S.' in an essay framing, as it were, a recognisable portrait of what Burns calls my 'mug.' In spite of the strictures of 'C. K. S.' I remain, I fear, impenitent. To be sure opinions may differ, and the point at issue is perhaps inconspicuous, though, I think, essential. If any line is drawn, it must be drawn somewhere. Thus nobody would dream of censuring publishers, or annotators, of Shakspeare or Milton, or of Dr. Johnson. I am accused of inconsistency, (as I understand) because I have written introductions and notes on Coleridge and Scott. But I did not make prey of these authors as soon as the breath was out of the bodies of their copyrights. For many years 'all men had taken their prey' on Scott and Coleridge, as on the Northern lowlands in the last century; or as on Shakspeare and Dr. Johnson. I trust sincerely that I injured no man's interest, or sentiment. Certainly I worked with the approval and assistance of the lineal descendants of the Author of *Waverley*, and of the Author of *Christabel*.

* * *

Here an obvious point may be taken. Many works of great writers are just passing out of copyright. These writers have living representatives, direct or collateral. Those representatives may not wish to see their fathers' or uncles' books adorned, or corrected, by modern men of letters. Such objections may be

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well or ill founded, but I think that they ought to be respected. Thus C.'s *History of Patagonia* may be just now left unprotected by the law of copyright, and D. may blamelessly desire to edit the book, correct the errors, and add the latest results of research. But C.'s representatives may not like this: and C.'s original publishers will, of course, respect the wishes of the representatives of C. But A., a publisher, may have no such scruples. Is D. to assist him in publishing a new and improved edition of C.'s *History of Patagonia*, the moment that the copyright expires? The question is left to the discretion of D., a man of letters. It is a question, not of law, but of delicacy. Suppose that an American publisher desires to bring out the book of a living English writer, a book not copyright in America. Or suppose that an American writer has neglected to copyright a new book, which an English publisher desires to produce, without the consent of the American author. An English man of letters, asked to 'edit' either work, will probably, if the nature of the circumstances occurs to him, decline to be a party to either enterprise. It is lawful for him to take part, but it is not expedient. In the same way, I think, he may choose to decline a share in producing any book of which the copyright has just expired, in England. At all events, the point of conscience is worth considering.

* * *

If I remember rightly, 'C. K. S.' named three or four English firms (probably there are others unnamed) which do not take their prey on the lands of newly defunct copyright. Such firms, it is obvious, being of some antiquity, are placed at a disadvantage. A., B. and C. only started in business recently, say within the last thirty years. Unless they have purchased old copyrights, there is nothing of theirs on which the older houses could drive the spoil, even if they were so inclined. The new men have, commonly, none but books young in copyright, and full, at least, of legal life. They have no 'bodies' to 'snatch,' even if their 'bodies' were worth 'snatching.' There can be no reciprocity in these laudable practices, between the long-established E. and the F. of yesterday. In Carlyle's celebrated petition, he begs that a certain period may be allowed to copyright, after which people 'may steal.' Whether, to use Carlyle's phrase, people *should* steal, at the very earliest moment permitted by the law, is, obviously, a question merely of moral taste, which every one must answer for himself. That question can scarcely be decided by affirming that the new hand is a much better hand than the old one. Yester-

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day I saw a copy of an edition of *Vanity Fair*, a book which is open to all men who desire to drive a *creagh* over it. The work was decorated with new illustrations that, to me, seemed almost profane. A new and feeble Becky, a new and terrible Rawdon Crawley, an Emmy who made me shudder, were presented to the eye. These did not improve the novel, and I don't think a man of letters should try to improve it, or elucidate it, without the approval of the representative of the Author. The task of elucidation would be pleasant. Probably many of the new generation do not know who 'Ross and Osbaldistone' were; they are named in connection with a pigeon shooting match. These heroes are now less universally familiar than they were when first the yellow covers of *Vanity Fair* blossomed, half unseen. But the scholiast must wait a while, however anxious to be at Ross and Osbaldistone.

* * *

The words of the old song, 'The bonny bonny Banks o' Loch Lomond,' or 'o' Binnorie,' have long been a puzzle. Mr. William Black did not like them, and, in his last novel, *Wild Eileen*, he published a version doubtless of his own composition. I then put forth, in the 'Ship,' a version of my own, which, to be sure, made sense, but needed a number of historical notes. I now offer a traditional version, collected, or recollected, by a lady of Clan Diarmaid, who, when a child, heard it sung as follows.

* * *

BY YON BONNIE BANKS

By yon bonnie banks and by yon bonnie braes,
  Where the sun shines sae bright and sae clearly,
Where I and my true love were ever wont to gae
  On the bonnie bonnie braes of Binnorie.
    Oh ye'll tak' the high road, &c.

Wi' his bonnie laced shoon and his buckles sae clear,
  And the plaid on his shoulder hung fairly,
Ae blink o' his ee wad banish a' care,
  Sae bonnie was the look o' Prince Charlie.

As lang as I live, and as lang as I breathe,
  I'll sing o' his praises sae clearly,
Though my true love was slain by the arrows of death,
  And Flora laments for Prince Charlie.

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The thistle will bloom, and the king hae his ain,
And true lovers meet in the gloamin',
But I and my true love will never meet again
By the bonnie bonnie braes o' Binnorie.

* * *

All the more because it is so dreamlike and confused, I am inclined to think that this is really a traditional version. 'The arrows of death,' so incongruous to the general style, and so easily improved into congruity, is a touch of the eighteenth century. Why the speaker and the listener are to enter Scotland by different paths, remains a mystery, nor can we decide whether Loch Lomond, or the Binnorie of the old ballad (wherever it may lie), is the original reading.

* * *

In Lady John Scott has passed away a song-writer of remarkable merit, and a link with the generation of Sir Walter Scott. Her husband, the brother of the young Duke of Buccleugh of Scott—the 'old Duke' of Border memories—had left traditions of his sporting feats that reached me in my childhood. Two or three only of Lady John's songs were well known, such as *Douglas, Douglas!* and *Ye Murmuring Waters.* Like Lady Nairne and Lady Anne Lindsay, Lady John Scott shrank from the notoriety of authorship. I have heard that many of her verses were never given to the world, and that some or all of them, in manuscript, were accidentally lost. A daughter of the old Cavalier house of Spottiswoode, she retained the ancient opinions, and she possessed a valuable collection of Stuart relics that never were exhibited in public. Among these things (I believe) was the wedding ring of Charles Edward, with his head, in cameo, on a turquoise. In the Stuart Papers has recently been found, in his hand, the rhymed posy of the ring; not a splendid example of the suppressed *Poems by the Young Chevalier.* Probably not one copy of that tract is known to survive. The relics, or most of them, have been bequeathed by Lady John to the Duke of Buccleugh. She was fond of things old, and erected, I believe, a memorial on the scene of a very strange traditional event, 'The Foul Fords,' near Longformacus, in Lammermuir. The version of the tradition given in my *Book of Dreams and Ghosts* (p. 269) was recorded, I believe, by Lady John, though it reached me through another channel. It seems too probable that her songs, for the most part, have passed beyond record, a thing to be regretted, though probably consonant with her own wishes.

* * *

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These pages are no place for politics, for what is written to-day here may not be published for a month. In a month events may confute to-day's wisdom or make it obsolete. But there can be no harm in reminding such philosophers as combine love of their brother Boers with denunciations of wrath against such British soldiers as have not 'taken the pledge,' that the Boers themselves are far from being Total Abstainers. They are said to have 'done themselves very well' at Kimberley; champagne being present in their host. References to beer and even to whisky in their correspondence prove that they are what dwellers in a thirsty land usually are—rather fond of a modest quencher. Let me not be supposed to blame them; far from me is the intention. But if some reasoners really believe in their own principles, they should not confine themselves to denouncing the Briton who is athirst. They should circulate 'Temperance' tracts among military men of *both* sides. When I read of 300 ships that brought wine from Bordeaux for about 8,000 French in Scottish service (say in 1558), I appreciate the heroic thirst of the men of the age of the Reformation. It is about a shipload of Bordeaux wine to every twenty-seven men: there or thereabouts. Huge quantities of wine, about a daily quart for each man, were at the same period provided for English armies on the march, not to speak of beer, which was almost as necessary as gunpowder. In those days it was a goodly *ruse* for a besieged garrison to fill the outer court with casks of liquor, and leave the gate open to the thirsty foe.

> 'Thirty casks are nearly done, yet the revel 's scarce begun,
> It were knightly sport and fun to strike in!'
> 'Nay, tarry till they come,' quoth Neish, 'unto the rum—
> They are working at the mum, and the gin!'

The poem is in *Bon Gaultier*; and I wish some modern editor of that classic would tell me who Neish was, and Sir Launcelot Bogle, and Sir Roderick Dalgliesh, and Provan, and George of Gorbals, and Brownlee. 'Tis 'A Legend of Glasgow,' but sorely needs a scholiast.

* * *

Not only the drink, but the meat of an English army, about 1550, seems to have been liberally supplied. Thus, in 1547, Somerset led 18,000 men for a three weeks' raid into Scotland. For eight days' march he provided 22,000 gallons of *sweet* wine: some kind of sherry or sack. He sent provisions to the Firth or Forth for twenty days in the same proportions. Each man had

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daily, 'a pound of biscuit, a pottel of drink, and two pounds of flesh.'

* * *

This will seem portentous to Mr. Miles, author of *Muscle, Brain, and Diet.*[1] Mr. Miles's is a remarkable book. He is a Master of Arts, and a 'Classical Honours Coach' at Cambridge, and 'Winner of the Tennis Gold Prize' for the last three years. Moreover, he is amateur champion at Rackets. Consequently his muscular development and staying powers must be remarkable. The point is that *he* does not eat two pounds of beef a day, with a pottel of wine, but lives on 'cheaper and simpler foods,' such as Protene Biscuits (whatever they may be), and, generally, on grain and green things. He is logical enough to see that what suits him need not suit everybody, but it may suit many people, and the diet is cheap. A pretty parody of a Socratic or Platonic dialogue predisposes the reader in favour of Mr. Miles, who, at least, has humour and reading, and is no fanatic. He began his New Diet by way of experiment, 'without a shred of faith,' so his success cannot be attributed to 'suggestion,' or 'imagination.' He can now work harder, and play harder, and does not need so much exercise to keep 'fit.' Moreover, whereas he had previously no objection to his beer and other fluids, he has now no taste for those luxuries. Clearly the commissariat for an army of *milites*, of Mr. Miles's, would be light and frugal. He has given up tea, and is devoted to proteid, 'or albuminous matter,' about which the present critic knoweth nothing. Mr. Miles's normal day begins at 6.30, includes a walk (or run) of six or seven miles, four hours of tuition and study, an hour of tennis, three hours of philology, and about two hours of Darwin, and Drummond's *Natural Law*, the last, probably, taking the place of a novel or other work of fancy. *But* a mutton chop produces depression and pains in the joints. So I prefer to cleave to mutton chops. There is something cheerless and lacking in conviviality about a diet of biscuits and nuts, and other cheap and simple things. But a fairly pleasing list of *menus* is given, and, on the whole, Mr. Miles (by dint of *not* being a fanatic) makes out probably the best case for a kind of vegetarianism that has ever been stated. We know that Tennyson tried the experiment, but came back to his ordinary diet with extreme gusto. It is certain that almost everybody who can do so eats too much, and that people in very good health eat relatively little and drink less.

[1] Sonnenschein.

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Our existing habits of diet have little to be said for them, except that they are pleasant! We may, or our descendants may, change their habits. Claret, port, and Burgundy are pleasant. The men of the last century acted simply on this knowledge, and many of them were giants in mental and bodily strength. But poets, philosophers, or statesmen, they died early, almost all of them, and were early incapacitated, and suffered ten or twelve years of agony from gout. Pitt, Fox, Smollett, Fielding, and many others are mournful examples. The average of life among modern men of genius really seems to give about twenty years, at least, of additional and less painful existence, when we compare, say, Gladstone, Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin, with eighteenth-century people of equal eminence. These are unscientific statistics, of course, and Tennyson's bottle of port did him no harm. At a first glance, changed habits in diet seem accountable for the improvement. A similar change, in the direction of Mr. Miles's ideas, may do as much for the people of the future.

* * *

As to drinks, Mr. Miles candidly admits that 'at present there seems to be no really pleasant drink which is free from stimulant or irritant.' Tea and coffee, as well as alcohol, are bad for us somehow. But, in the new diet, it seems that people will not feel a desire for alcohol, tea, and coffee. Obviously the one way to cure intemperance is to remove the desire to drink. If the world takes to Protene Biscuits it will automatically be relieved of the craving for the mum and the gin. But, alas, 'Man, being reasonable, must get drunk,' as the poet says; and he will cleave to what is pleasant and profiteth not. If he is to be converted, Mr. Miles is more likely to convert him than are the common vegetarians, on whose errors he discourses as an impartial friend.

* * *

'Read anything to me but history, for *that* cannot be true,' Sir Robert Walpole is said to have observed. Probably he said nothing of the kind; but it is assuredly very difficult for history to be true. I have just noted a curious instance. Mr. Froude, in his 'History of England' (volume vi., p. 502, 1870), is quoting a letter of Lord James Stuart to Queen Elizabeth. Its date is August 6, 1561. Lord James is hinting that Elizabeth might do well to recognise his sister, Mary Stuart, as successor to the English crown. 'What if your Majesty's title did remain untouched as well for yourself as for the issue of your body? Inconvenient were it to provide that to the Queen my sovereign

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her own place were reserved in the succession to the crown of England . . . ?' Now this is intelligible, but not readily intelligible: Lord James means, 'Where would be the inconvenience in the arrangement?' Still, I own that the sentence puzzled me on a first reading, especially as, on the same page, Mr. Froude quoted Lord James as using the word 'inconvenience,' which, in the letter as cited, he did not use. Now the odd thing is that Lord James *did* use this very word 'inconvenience' in another copy of the same letter, running, 'What inconvenience were it, if your Majesty's title did remain untouched,' &c. This is the copy given by Mr. Tytler, and the whole sentence is perfectly clear at the first glance. Apparently Mr. Froude meant to write 'What inconvenience were it,' &c., but somehow *did* write what I have quoted; the words 'Inconvenient were it,' which begin a new sentence in Mr. Froude's version, being really meant to follow 'What,' and precede 'if your Majesty's title,' while 'inconvenience' was accidentally written 'inconvenient.' In other passages of the same letter curious discrepancies occur between the two copies: Mr. Froude using the letter in the 'Scotch MSS. Rolls House,' and Mr. Tytler following the draft, I presume, in the State Paper Office, Edinburgh. So a poor body, I suppose, must examine both MSS. with his own eyes. After all, probably Elizabeth never saw the letter, as it was enclosed to Cecil, to show it or not to show it, and he was not likely to lay it before the Queen.

* * *

Of what colour were 'eyes of vair,' such as are attributed to Nicolete, in 'Aucassin and Nicolete,' and to other beauties of old time? *Vair* is a kind of fur, and I believe some think that *verre* (glass) is meant: glass-coloured eyes. In the opposite way, others hold that Cinderella, with her glass slippers, shoes of *verre*, was really 'a young lady in fur-topped boots;' slippers of *vair*, like her who won the heart of Mr. Winkle. As to the 'eyes of vair,' a correspondent points out that, in heraldry, the fur, *vair*, 'is depicted as blue on white, and there is reason to believe that originally it consisted of a white fur on which patches of blue fur were fitted. It seems to me that this would make apt comparison with bright blue eyes and pearly white eyeballs.' He adds a remark on fair-haired girls 'whose sclerotics are a translucent pearly greyish white—the iris being of a very clear brilliant blue,' quite worthy of Nicolete. But I fear that heraldic colours were fantastically conventional: however, the theory is as good as any that one has seen mooted.

* * *

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In a very minor literary matter I am confronted by a curious conflict of evidence, external and internal. In the *Cornhill Magazine* for February I wrote an article on the old ballad of *Lord Bateman.* Cruikshank, about 1839–40, illustrated an edition of this ballad. The tract contains an editorial Introduction, confessedly not by the artist, with notes clearly by the author of the Introduction. Now as to the ballad, it is certainly traditional, it is undeniably *not* by Dickens, Thackeray, or Cruikshank himself. Yet the little volume is sold as 'by Dickens' to collectors of Dickens's first editions. Was Dickens, then, the author of the Introduction and Notes? In my *Cornhill* article I denied this, and attributed the Notes to Thackeray. They are in his vein of academic banter, the vein of the notes to his own *Timbuctoo.* Dickens had nothing academic about him. The notes 'chaff' Byron: Thackeray was always mocking at Byron. I remember no sign that Dickens had found Byron out, or took any interest in the noble Poet. In fact, I would swear to the notes as Thackeray's, and I appeal to all Dickensians—are the notes like Dickens's work?

* * *

But a correspondent informs me that he heard a brother-in-law of Dickens aver, about 1840, that, to his knowledge, Dickens wrote the notes to *Lord Bateman!* So what becomes of my internal evidence for Thackeray's authorship? Dickens's brother-in-law, sixty years ago, told a living and honourable witness that Dickens was the author of these amusing academic skits. I cannot distrust this evidence, and yet—I read the Notes again, and my critical conscience shouts 'Thackeray!' Perhaps Dickens imitated Thackeray. If so, I wish he had imitated him more abundantly.

ANDREW LANG.

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The Editor of LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE,
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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

JUNE 1900.

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One of Ourselves.

BY L. B. WALFORD,
AUTHOR OF 'MR. SMITH,' &c.

CHAPTER XIX.

HONOURED GUESTS.

'MRS. MARJORUM, I'm going to give a dinner-party.'

'Yes, sir.'

'A regular dinner-party, you understand?'

'Yes, sir. What day, sir, if you please?'

'The day after to-morrow; I am telling you in good time, because in this weather we shall want most of the things cold, so you can get them cooked beforehand.'

'Very true, sir. What—what sort of things would be cold?' The farmer's wife surveyed her lodger doubtfully, imagination not being one of the good woman's strong points.

'Salmon,' said he; 'we'll dispense with soup, and begin with a cut of cold salmon and mayonnaise sauce. Never mind the sauce; it will come down ready-made. Also cutlets, galantines, lobsters in aspic; they'll all turn up in the hamper'—smiling at her—'and the sweets and ices too.'

'I'm not to do anything of our own, sir?'

'Oh dear, yes; we shall want a lot of our own' (no one had a finer tact than William Farrell), 'the things I mentioned are mere extras. Must have extras for a party, you know, Mrs. Marjorum.'

'To be sure, sir'—brow again smooth; 'then—?' looking at him, and fingering her apron. 'Leg of mutton, sir?'

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'N—no. Ladies don't care for mutton and beef; we'll give them something more fanciful. What about ducklings?'

'Why now, sir? Ducklings? Why you might ha' known' (perhaps he did) 'that was the very thing I came to speak to you about this morning, to see if so be you could fancy a duckling? They are quacking down there by the pond'—hearkening through the window—'and as plump after last night's rain—guzzlin' since daylight—there's a couple as'll be the better o' killing this very minute'—her fingers itching for their necks.

'And green peas from our own garden,' said he. (To hear him talk of 'Our own garden'—the dear creature!) 'You must do the vegetables, mistress' (she felt as if he had bestowed a high command), 'and fruit for a tart. But we must not strip the garden; your flowers are sure to be admired, so I'll send down enough to dress the table and the other room,' carelessly—hollyhocks and dahlias were all very well in their place, but he had selected from the finest exotics that Covent Garden could supply.

'You'll want cream with the tart, sir?'

'And with the coffee. By the way, have you plenty of coffee?'

She had, and he knew he could trust her making of it, having been at the pains not only to instruct, but to superintend the manufacture of his after-dinner cup, on first coming to the farm. No second lesson had been needed.

By dint of the above judicious handling all was thus happily arranged, and the advent of the hamper awaited with serenity by the high-spirited dame; and we may add that, owing to this same adroitness on the part of a skilled performer, heartburnings, vexation, and mortification were alike conspicuous by their absence from Mrs. Marjorum's ample breast on the arrival presently of supplies which far exceeded anything she had been prepared for.

Fish, game, jellies, pasties, bestrewed her kitchen table; grapes, peaches, nectarines, and a redolent pine had to follow. There were two kinds of ices, each in its own refrigerator; there was an ice soufflé; there were pretty, dainty creams, pink and white; there was a case of sparkling wines.

'Dear Lord, sir, it's a fair wonder to me how you can put up with what you get here, you that's accustomed to the like of this!' cried the bewildered housewife at last. It seemed to her that she had been harbouring a prince in disguise.

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William Farrell laughed, well pleased and amused. He was a plain feeder, both from choice and necessity: 'I leave this sort of thing to my brother Thomas,' said he; 'a partridge and a roast apple are enough for me.'

'To be sure, sir, as I know.'

'But when I have guests to whom I wish to do honour,' proceeded the gentleman with a peculiar and significant emphasis, 'they shall see that no pains have been spared. Shall they not, Mrs. Marjorum?'

'They shall, sir.'

With his own hand he decked the little chamber until it grew into a bower. The scent was luscious, almost overpowering at last.

A couple of silver lamps were produced, and elegant china of a rare and costly make appeared mysteriously. Upon the silver dessert-dishes which presently adorned the sideboard rich fruit was piled high; small *bonbonnières* of sugared violets and rose-leaves filled up the interstices.

'You understand about the wine, mistress?'

'Marjorum does, sir. He is attending to it.'

'And everything will be ready at half-past seven?'

'By the clock, sir.'

Whereat William Farrell retired to his bedroom.

When he emerged he was in full evening dress, and a diamond glittered in his shirt-front. He took out his handkerchief; it was perfumed with eau de Cologne. His hair had been cut and his beard trimmed that day. He looked singularly well.

It had seemed to Lionel Colvin that to put on an evening suit when going to dine at a farmhouse with a solitary bachelor was unnecessary, and would probably appear in the eyes of his host ridiculous; but the first sight of the latter strolling down the lane to meet his guests made him secretly glad that he had given way to his sisters on the point.

They had argued—under Bet's tutelage—that the compliment was due not to Billy, but to themselves. 'We know what we ought to do, whether he does or not,' they protested (the latter clause being an addition of Georgie's, in reply to her brother's 'The Farrells know nothing about such things').

'Let us show that we are accustomed to proper evening clothes, both you and we,' urged Bet, who for her part had early fixed on what she was to wear.

'But it is so dusty walking.'

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'Not by the fields, as we go. It is not a mile; and on this beautiful evening, when there is no chance of rain or wind——'

'All right; perhaps you're right. Walking does them no harm.' ('For Henham is very much further off than the White Farm,' thought he, 'and what if they were to turn round on me with my own argument the first time I dine at Henham?')

'You see, *he* is in evening dress,' whispered Bet, as they caught sight of the figure in the lane. The diamond flashed out as she spoke.

'You would have liked me to wear diamonds, too, I suppose?' retorted Lionel, ironically; but when he felt that the remark hurt her, he made a species of apology. 'Only said it to tease you, old girl. A single diamond is no harm, though I bar them myself; and you were right about the other thing. It would never have done to seem to think his dinner not good enough.'

In his heart he hardly expected a dinner that could be called a dinner at all. There would be food in abundance, no doubt—the Farrells ran to food; excellent in quality, profuse in quantity; but Lionel, who was precise in his notions, had rather jeered at Georgie's phrase 'dining out' in connection with the White Farm.

He said very little about it afterwards. There came a day when he hated and loathed to think of it.

The party was ushered into a large, low-roofed chamber, well lit by windows in the two outer walls; and this, Mrs. Marjorum's best sitting-room, at other times, it must be confessed, a somewhat bare, if clean and well-kept apartment, was now a very blaze of gorgeous bloom; while rich tapestries, distributed with taste, transformed homely armchairs, and made of the old-fashioned couch a throne of luxury. The newest books and magazines bestrewed the tables.

Forethought and preparation were so obvious, that the lively exclamations of his sisters as they flitted hither and thither, examining and admiring, could not be found fault with even by their critical brother. He could not but own that where so much had been done acknowledgment was becoming; and besides anyone may praise flowers.

'A bachelor's den,' said Billy, modestly, 'has to do what it can in the way of furbishing itself up when it is honoured like this. Yes, I did send them down from town. Sounds odd, doesn't it? But country flowers—at least, farmhouse flowers—

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are best left on their own stalks. We can go out and see them there presently. Mrs. Marjorum has quite a show.'

'I never smelt anything like this,' said Georgie, looking round from a deep draught of tuberoses. 'And I never saw these growing before. Just look!' and she drew half-way up from its glittering vase a heavy-laden branch. In another minute the vase lay broken on the floor, the water pouring over the carpet. 'Oh dear, oh dear!'

The sisters were down on their knees mopping with their handkerchiefs, vexation and shame painted on their countenances, before Billy could stop them, and the luckless Georgie had followed the stream to the far end of the room when a voice—the same kind voice that had before consoled on a similar occasion—brought peace afresh to her bosom. 'My dear child, the glass wasn't worth sixpence' (he had paid a guinea for it). 'The only thing that matters is your own pretty handkerchief. Let me fetch another,' said Billy, slipping into the next room.

In a moment Bet was by her sister's side.

'What was he saying to you? What were you whispering about?'

'Bet!'

For Bet's voice was like the low roar of a lioness.

'I say *what*? Tell me this instant.'

Georgie shook herself free. Billy came back. She had not told. He smiled to himself; he guessed what had happened.

'Georgie is the smasher of the family,' said Lionel, to the surprise of all coming to the rescue. 'We have scarcely anything left whole at The Nook. Bet, you should have brought her up better. Where are these to go?'

For he had calmly picked up the flowers, which no one else had thought about, and was holding them in his hand.

'I think they belong to the "smasher,"' said Billy, laughing; 'but perhaps, as she can hardly wear them all, they may be divided.' And he broke up the branch, presenting all round; but Bet walked up to Lionel with hers.

She pinned it into his buttonhole with sisterly solicitude, and was thus engaged when dinner was announced.

'I am afraid we must go down single file,' said Billy; 'the staircase does not admit of two abreast,' and he stood by the door, holding it open. 'And I dare say you will hardly believe it,' as they severally passed before him, 'but we had to do the same at a house I was dining at in Park Lane the other day. It was

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the quaintest little house, with stairs like a mountain path,' continued he, following down, and talking all the way. 'Now'—to Lionel—'will you kindly take the other end of the table? And—oh! ——' stopping short, for Bet had walked straight to a seat by her brother, leaving the one she should have occupied for anybody who chose. Poll and Georgie were standing irresolute.

But if for the space of a single brief moment our host was disconcerted, it must be said for him that he recovered himself with admirable celerity; nor did he seek to change the order of things. The table was small; it was not worth while to be formal.

And Bet made believe to be all that was happy and content in her self-imposed banishment. If Mr. Farrell chose to prefer Georgie's company—and he must prefer it, or he would not have run off after her to the end of the room—he had certainly a right to it at his own table. She would not interfere—oh dear no.

And he need not think she minded. She, mind? She was gayer, more lively and talkative than usual; quite as brimful of animation and admiration as any of them, and if she did make herself generally agreeable, and rather avoid meeting the eye of her host, what was there to blame in that?

Lionel was more than pleased with Bet. Now he was sure that he had been mistaken, and yet not mistaken. He had gauged William Farrell's feelings fairly enough, but as for response in the breast of his elder sister, there was none.

And she wished it to be seen there was none. She was willing to come to his party, and to go on being friendly and neighbourly; but nothing more.

'She is behaving splendidly,' thought he; 'it might have been awkward, but now it is not awkward at all. Lady Blanche said that Bet had charming manners; upon my word, I think she almost has'—which was a vast concession on our brother's part. In terror of over-estimating himself or anyone belonging to him, 'almost' was the highest point he ever reached with reference to his sisters.

And he felt really sorry for Billy Farrell, who had spent so much money and taken such a wealth of trouble in vain.

It was an easy sorrow, to be sure; because, however much he might pity the man, that sort of thing has to be borne philosophically. Billy, the banker, had doubtless gone through the experience before; possibly many times before. He could not

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have reached his present age without having had *affaires du cœur*, and would get over this as he had its predecessors.

In the meantime the thing was to avoid awkwardness and consciousness; to accept a princely entertainment with suitable gratitude, and help it to go off well. Lionel threw himself heartily into the spirit of the thing.

As for Poll and Georgie, they were in the seventh heaven. The festive little chamber—not nearly as large or good a room as that overhead—was still in their eyes a scene of enchantment, and their brisk young appetites did full justice to the delicacies which appeared at every course.

The dusk deepened, and the silver lamps were lit. With their alluring glow there fluttered in moths from the surrounding woodlands, and now and then a heavy wasp settled on the fruit and sucked greedily.

'I like wasps,' said William Farrell, as the girls shrank a little; 'they do business in such an uncompromising way. No nonsense about them. No fooling. And they won't hurt you if you let them alone,' he added to Poll, who was too near an extremely business-like intruder for her own comfort. 'Oh, if it makes you unhappy——' and he rose, and, taking the peach with the insect on it, threw both out of the window.

'Oh, what waste of a good peach!' cried Georgie.

'He does not care what he wastes,' mentally commented Lionel.

The feast over, an adjournment out of doors was proposed. A table with decanters upon it was placed beneath an ancient mulberry-tree, where a rustic bench afforded seats for some, and low basket chairs, obviously new additions, accommodated the rest. Had the ladies any objection to cigars?

'Not out of doors,' said Bet, gravely.

She had told Georgie she would say it. She was sure to be asked, and she was not going to cry out, 'Oh, we like it; we love it; we adore the dear, delightful smell of smoke!' as some girls did. Instead she would give a polite and qualified permission. 'And don't you look at me and grin,' added she; 'that's a dreadful habit of yours——'

'Oh, Bet, I don't; I haven't grinned for ages.'

'You did when Mrs. Tom——'

'Never mind Mrs. Tom now. I shan't grin, whatever you say to Billy. You may be as grand as you please; only it will be funny to remember how we used to get hold of Lionel's ends

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whenever we could; and now we don't, only because he has taken to a pipe.'

'It is not "only" that; I wouldn't touch his ends now.'

'Well, I would,' said Georgie, promptly; 'and I know lots of girls do. They don't know what to do with them when they get them; they puff out before they draw in, and make hideous faces; but they think it fine. However, I'll take care. I'll look at Billy's cigar as if I had never seen such a thing in my life. Do you suppose, Bet, he would be shocked?' she had subjoined after a pause.

'Of course,' said Bet, readily. 'Shocked at us—perhaps not at other girls.'

'Oh, blow other girls! I can't help it: you *will* thrust them down my throat. Just when I am trying my best too.'

But when the sceptic heard Mr. Farrell's deferential tone and perceived his reception of her sister's calm rejoinder, her faith in Bet was great.

Bet sat in the middle of the bench with a sister on either side.

'You come and sit by me,' she had exhorted, seizing the opportunity when the men were behind, carrying out the table. 'Poll—here!' in a trenchant undertone; and Poll, who was making for a chair, meekly obeyed. 'Now—Georgie!' and Georgie did the same. Bet was thus safely entrenched. Whoever wondered, no one could suggest an alteration of the arrangement.

So they sat and talked, and the moon rose overhead, while bats flitted past on noiseless wings.

'We ought to have some music,' said Billy, suddenly. 'This is a night for music; what was I thinking of not to provide it? A hidden orchestra discoursing sweet strains——'

'Would not be half so sweet as your singing,' cried the audacious Georgie. Poll would not have thought of it, nor Bet of saying it, but Georgie had no diffidence.

'Do sing to us,' cried she, in pleasing accents; 'sing that one—what was it, Bet?'

But Bet did not know what her sister meant.

'Why, you said afterwards you liked it the best of all!'

'In that case we must try to find it,' said Billy, with a glance, which however won no response. 'Oh, I will sing if you like;' for of course he had meant to sing all along, and often as they had heard the rich, sweet voice before, it seemed to his listeners that they had never fully appreciated its charm till now.

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Every note fell pure and true upon the ear, and gradually gaining in power, soon filled the dusky air with melody.

'Oh, how beautiful!' Georgie leaned forward over her clasped hands to breathe and sigh her artless, undisguised, illimitable admiration. 'How beautiful! How delightful! That was it, I do believe; but how did you know? That great shout at the end, that was what Bet liked. She tried to do it over to us——'

'Do let Bet alone. I can speak for myself.' A vexed whisper brought up the speaker short.

'Why don't you, then?' quoth the latter, back.

But perceiving that Bet was in one of her moods, Georgie ran on by herself. 'Please another, Mr. Farrell. Never mind what. We don't know the names, and we don't know the songs, but we do like to hear you. We like whatever you sing.'

Could he have a finer compliment?

His voice, though of no great power nor scope, had that peculiar quality which appeals still more to the heart than to the ear. Its low notes vibrated with thrilling tenderness.

And perhaps the singer threw into it on this occasion a passion, an intensity which was not always there; now and again it almost died away altogether; his hearers caught their breaths to listen.

Did they mark that all his songs were love songs? Now in one language, now in another, but always bearing on the one theme—the old, old theme—the theme that is never lost, never obsolete.

'Good-night, beloved, good-night'—with the last echo of 'Good-night' a hush fell upon the little group, and some were glad they could not see each other's faces.

Then: 'That was awfully jolly,' said Lionel, rising as though the parting strain had been suggestive; 'and I am sure we have to thank you for a most delightful evening. You had better get on your things, girls.'

They rose submissively.

'But you must just take one look round the garden,' said Billy, quickly. 'The good people here will never forgive me if I let you go without exhibiting their prize dahlias, which are their special pride just now. Never mind the clock,' as a pertinacious cuckoo made the hour known with aggressive regularity through the open kitchen door; 'summer nights are not meant for sleep,' continued the speaker, clearing the chairs out of the way, and looking suggestively at Poll and Georgie, who, nothing loth, were on the move directly.

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Bet however hung back.

'It really is very late,' said she hurriedly, with a choking intonation. 'Don't go—we can't go—we must go home. Lionel,' she appealed to her brother.

But he had sauntered on after his sisters.

It was someone else who returned to the side of the laggard.

'I am sure we ought to go,' reiterated she, desperately. She was trembling from head to foot, and her panting bosom rose and fell in the moonlight. Why had they gone? Why had they left her? She had been so careful all the evening, and now——!

'Call them back,' she muttered, hoarsely, 'call them back,' her gaze pursuing the retreating figures. 'They—we—oh, let me go!'

But he had not touched her; he was only standing by with a smile on his face. Perhaps it was as well she did not see that smile. As it was, an invisible chain seemed to have been cast around her, and her feet clung to the ground whereon they stood.

'Going?' said a deep voice in her ear. 'Going? Without one kind word?'

. . . . . .

'They might have come with us,' murmured Georgie, pettishly. 'It was all very fine for Mr. Billy to say he wanted to show us the garden, and then whisk out of sight with Bet the moment our backs were turned. He's a flirt; that's what he is'—much put out by the unlooked-for defalcation.

Previous to this she had had a glorious time, and was just sufficiently enamoured of the general favourite to find supreme satisfaction and exultation in having had him for the past hour or two so incontestably to herself as to disprove in the eyes of all Lionel's tiresome and persistent suspicions of Bet.

Lionel, she argued, had always been stupid about Bet. Because he thought the most of her (and was welcome), that was not to say everyone must do the same. Bet had her admirers, and who begrudged her them?

But this was no case of an admirer. Billy was everybody's Billy. He never had singled out, never did single out any one of the three from the rest. Did not Bet herself say the same?

Well, that was all she wanted, Miss Georgie protested mentally; and it is true that had she earlier in the evening been rallied on her temporary conquest, she would have stuck to her guns and disclaimed it; but she was disappointed and sullen now.

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The dahlias had been easily found, and there was no one to show them off, nor to discuss them with. She hated dahlias.

'At any rate, we've done the civil by them, and had better be going now,' yawned her brother; and the three retraced their steps to the house.

They expected to find the others waiting them there; but no one was in sight, and silence prevailed.

'Where can they be, Lionel?' said Poll.

'We must have missed them. If we listen we shall hear their voices,' replied he; and all listened intently.

The cuckoo clock struck the half-hour.

'I say, we really ought to go,' began Lionel: but at the moment Georgie touched his arm.

'They are there;' she said, looking from him and pointing with her finger. 'There! Down the lane! Far down! I see Bet's white frock. Shall we go and meet them? Had we not better go and meet them?'

'And we can take our things and start from there,' appended Poll. 'If we wait till they come back, and have then all the leave-taking to go through——'

'Besides, they are not coming back,' cried Georgie shrilly. 'They are moving further and further away! Come, be quick;' running into the house.

'Yes, I think you had better be as quick as you can, Poll,' said Lionel, very gravely.

But he said nothing harsh or unkind to Bet on the way home.

From time to time he looked at her, and a kind of sigh struggled in his bosom. They might say what they would, he could not be deceived now, could never be deceived again.

And he did so want Bet to be happy, would have given so much to be able to draw her to him, and whisper: 'Come, tell me about it. I can understand, I can sympathise. You need not be afraid of me.' His own poor little Bet, his brave little Bet; neglected, trodden down, roughened and embittered in past days; still blind, impulsive, ignorant, self-willed, and oh, so pathetically young! He felt sure she needed him, yet would not suffer him. He read that in her look which said 'Stand off!' as clearly as if the words were spoken.

The thing had got to be faced. It was plain he should have to accept William Farrell for his brother-in-law; and as a few months before he would have found nothing distasteful in the

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prospect, all that remained to be done was to rekindle former good-will, and put late-begotten pride in his pocket.

He had no reasonable grounds for objecting to Billy; rather he would be universally esteemed a fool for not welcoming him with open arms.

One of the Farrells, the rich Farrells, the religious, philanthropic Farrells! It would be a credit to be connected with such a family.

Even Lady Blanche Massitur, born in the purple, was probably sufficiently modern in her ideas to think that a wealthy and respectable young man of decent appearance and manners was a good enough match for anybody. William Farrell was still a young man, if over thirty, and a few years more or less signified nothing. Character was everything. Character, and the means for a proper maintenance.

Someone had said this once in Lionel's hearing, and he now brought it to bear with a feeble sense of comfort.

What did it matter that he personally disliked Billy?

He started as he put into mental phrase what had been before a mere vague intuition, and hastily asked himself what he meant.

When had the dislike begun? What had caused it? Certainly it had disappeared at intervals; and he now found that the intervals were caused by vain assurances in which he had been so weak as to place confidence. 'Georgie misled me,' he told himself angrily; then sighed again and looked more tenderly at Bet than before.

He would not fail her at this pinch. She should be happy in her own way. She should never feel the loss of father and mother in this great crisis of her life. 'I can't speak to her,' thought he; 'some fellows could, but I can't. But as soon as ever she speaks to me——!'

Oh, if Bet had only spoken then!

CHAPTER XX.

THE OLD LACE-BOX.

Even her sisters expected that Bet would say something to somebody before the evening was over; but as she was silent, so were they. Bet, when she chose, could be more unapproachable than a stone wall, more repellent than a bristling fortress.

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Once or twice before she had had her 'affairs,' as has been hinted; had managed them morosely, and brought them to a close single-handed—having been singularly disagreeable while they lasted—but she had always confided the whole story to both her sisters afterwards, and invariably promised not to be so self-contained again.

'If you had only told me,' Georgie had declared on one occasion, '*I* would have made short work of that fine fellow who took *you* in. He took you in because it *was* you. If it had been Poll or me he was making sheep's eyes at, you would see fast enough what sheep's eyes they were.'

Bet had owned ruefully that she would.

But the next time it was the same thing over again; she would have none of their interference, and a suggestion of sheep's eyes produced a storm.

The storm raged, the thunderbolt fell, and Georgie had a new triumph.

'Now we are in the thick of it again,' reflected she; and what she wanted to know was, was this present fancy one of the series? or was it—was it—the end?

'Shall we have a Billy battle and be done with him?' pondered she; 'or——'? and she felt a strange presentiment that it was a case of 'or——'? 'Because of course he really is very nice and suitable, and he could not be anything else than in earnest,' ruminated she. 'I wish none of us need marry—oh dear, what should we do without Bet? But, then, we couldn't grow up to be the "three old maids of Lee!" We really couldn't. We must marry some time or other, and of course Bet must be the first. If only it weren't so near! Even to-night it has begun. She is far away from us all, she speaks in a sort of civil voice—it's dreadful,' moaned poor Georgie, terrified and desperately civil herself. 'She thinks we see nothing, and means us to see nothing, and it's *got to come*——'

Her heart quaked as she presently found herself alone with Bet in their bedroom.

Anything was better than silence, however; and as Bet, who never feigned, proceeded to disrobe without a word, the initiative must be taken, come what might, by the other.

'How much he had done for us, Bet! What a lot of trouble he must have taken!'

Bet was sure he must, and thought it very kind—more than kind—of Mr. Farrell.

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'I don't suppose he minds about money,' continued Georgie, unfastening her spray of tuberoses, and letting it, quite by accident, of course, drop on the floor; 'but these beastly flowers cost goodness knows what, and——'

'Take care, dear; you will tread on it.'

Bet cheerfully picked up the spray, which was as fresh as when first culled, and walked towards the water-bottle.

'Don't put that *thing* in water!' cried Georgie, loudly. 'Its vile scent makes me sick. It was only the first whiff that was not disagreeable.'

'All these rich hot-house flowers pall upon one after the first,' said her sister, pleasantly. Bet was not to be angered. Oh, Bet! Poor Bet!

Suddenly Georgie turned upon her sister.

'Why did you fly at me like that about the broken glass?' she demanded.

Would Bet lie? Would she? It would be easy to feign indignation at carelessness, and harp upon the value of the glass; but Bet looked steadily round.

'I was angry because I was foolish,' she said. 'I took a mistaken fancy into my head. What it was'—she paused—'I would rather you did not ask me.'

There! That dreadful civility again! 'As if I were Lady Blanche or Leonora Massitur!' groaned its recipient.

All through it was the same. Whatever was said was agreed to politely or dissented from gently. There was no chiding, no frowning. On the other hand, no making merry with blithe, sportive frankness over the details of the evening. Georgie was thankful when the light was out and no more need be said; but as long as she was awake she was conscious of a figure by her side, lying perfectly still, to whom sleep was as far off as though it were noonday.

Bet now knew that she was beloved, but the actual words which would have opened her lips to others had not been spoken.

For her own part, she was glad of this; glad that the wonderful new joy which had come into her life was still a mysterious, unrecognised, she would fain have added unsuspected visitant.

That it was not quite the last was after all a trifle, and could be borne with. The day would come when she and Georgie would laugh together over the odd experience of being so shy with each other that they lay back to back and face from face upon their bed

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when the 'Good night!' kiss had passed, neither daring to move lest the other should know she was sleepless and thinking.

The day could not be long in coming. He had said so much, inferred so much—just stopped short, it seemed, because afraid to presume too far and claim more than would be accorded—that she could not doubt what the result of a few more meetings—perhaps of the very next meeting—would be.

And how good it was that he did not seem too sure of success! Her unlucky jealousy had not betrayed her to him, at all events. He thought her cold, indifferent, ungrateful. He only asked for 'one kind word.' All the evening he had refrained himself, and, smarting beneath supposed disdain, had yet had courage to play his part, both as host and entertainer, with a spirit worthy of the boldest days of chivalry; had laid his best at his lady's feet and seen it scorned, yet smiled and sung; till, unable to endure, at last there had burst from him the few short words which had rent the veil.

The happy girl smiled to herself as she lay still in the moonlight. She and Georgie always had their blinds up and their windows open on the warm summer nights, and, as a rule, even the early sun streaming in failed to disturb their slumbers.

There was, however, but one pair of closed eyes when the dawn broke which succeeded to this eventful evening; and Bet, a little, white-nightgowned figure, with overflowing hair and head resting on her hands, was sitting up when Georgie woke—and Georgie did not speak to her. Georgie pretended to sleep on.

A further result of the new order of things was that this young person, who had never before presumed to think for herself, now permitted her fancy to range at will along forbidden paths. Bet had forecast swift and certain disaster to Lionel should he have the temerity to raise his eyes to Leonora Massitur. 'Bosh!' quoth Georgie, tersely.

She had been at the pains to discover—it was William Farrell who knew and told her—that the Massiturs were merely people of good position, who by their wealth had been able to contract marriages which in a spurious fashion included them in the aristocracy.

'The Massitur who married Lady Blanche,' said Billy, 'was the big man of the lot. He was thought good enough for Lord Downing's daughter. Then there was a fellow in the Guards who got a baronet's daughter. And the sister married an Irish lord's second son. This Miss Massitur's father went in for money instead of rank. I forget who the mother was; but Miss What's-

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her-name must be a pretty considerable heiress. It's said that your uncle, Lord Umfreville, is after her. His place in Worcestershire——'

'Ughtred?' cried they all.

'Of course you know it. I forgot. A fine place, isn't it?' said Billy, with interest.

The three dilated. Lionel was not by, and to their own Billy they might surely expand at ease. They had told Lionel about it afterwards, suppressing, at Bet's instance, the remark anent Lord Umfreville. There was no need to bring this forward at present; it might chance to prove a useful weapon in their hands by-and-by.

'But I don't see why it should,' meditated Georgie now, with a reckless breaking and snapping of old bonds. 'I don't see why we should play the game for a nasty old uncle who is horrid to us and sha'n't have our Leonora. Lionel shall have her—that he shall. Bet was simply *Billying* when she talked as if he were not good enough. I don't think Billy knows everything, for my part. To think of Leonora's having a fine place for her own—finer than Henham—in the neighbourhood of Ughtred! Of course we never heard of it. Was it likely we should when that old cat, Sophia, never took us anywhere? But what if they should invite us now? They go to Worcestershire in September, Leonora said; and I should have heard all about it if we hadn't been so ordered to be quiet about Ughtred that even Worcestershire is contraband. I'll say what I please now, anyway.' And though something of a sigh escaped with the words, it was felt there was balm in Gilead. The same day the four went to Henham.

And there was no difficulty in getting either Leonora or her aunt to talk of King's Beacon.

'Leonora's place,' said Lady Blanche, smilingly displaying a photograph almost immediately upon their entrance. She had got it out on purpose; thought they would be interested in seeing it; also the views of the grounds, the chapel, the giant deodars, reckoned amongst the finest in England.

'Indeed it is beautiful, and in a most beautiful county, too,' said she, with animation. 'We usually winter there. We go in September; it is too warm before. When people fly off to the Riviera for sunshine, Leonora and I know of very bright sunshine nearer home that is good enough for us. King's Beacon is most charmingly sheltered and faces south. We have creepers in blossom at Christmas, and camellias overhanging the ponds in the spring.'

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'I believe, you know, that Auntie is fonder of King's Beacon than of Henham,' said Leonora, in a would-be aside. 'Isn't it naughty of her?' affectionately. 'If it weren't for her schools and poor people here, I do believe she would stay there all the year round——,'

'Oh dear!'

'Having *you* will make all the difference,' eagerly proceeded the speaker, when the laugh at Georgie's doleful 'oh dear!' had subsided; 'indeed it will. For till now we have really had nobody here; and the only thing we could do was to fill the house. One doesn't always want to do that.'

'Your brother tells me that you find this neighbourhood rather trying.' The elder lady turned to Bet, who was apparently absorbed in the photographs, though in reality her thoughts were wandering.

'Did Lionel say so?' murmured she.

'There are only the Farrells. Most worthy people, no doubt, but rather hopeless, aren't they?'

'Lady Blanche!' A quick flush overspread the young girl's face. 'They—we,' she stammered, 'they have been so kind to us——'

'That you would be a traitor to say a word against them. And I ought not to have tempted you, dear Bet. You are your father's own daughter, true as steel. You see, I really did not know,' proceeded Lady Blanche, in a gayer tone, 'and I have never had anything but the mere outside to judge from. I know the Stephen Farrells a very, a very little. They are not exactly interesting, and Leonora made nothing of the girls. Her own fault, I dare say. But if they are friends of yours——'

'Oh no! No! They are not. We never thought of them as friends.'

'It is the Charles Farrells then, perhaps?' pleasantly.

'Oh *no*, Lady Blanche. Emma!' Even Bet, in her perplexity and embarrassment, disowned Emma.

'The others are the Meredith Farrells, the young people——'

'We don't know them; they live too far off.

'And the newly-married couple—I forget what they are called?'

'The Alfred Farrells. They are rather nice. But we have only seen them at the other houses—I mean, at Beech Hall.'

'Beech Hall? That is the name I wanted. That is the great Farrell centre, is it not? You see what gossips Leonora and I

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are; we know all about everybody. Beech Hall is Mr. Thomas Farrell's, and his house is the rallying-point for all the relations.'

'She is really—Mrs. Tom is really——'

'Mrs. Tom is the best of the bunch,' struck in Georgie. 'She is a little, red-nosed woman who calls everybody "dear," and swears black is white if the black belongs to any one of the Farrell tribe—but there is no harm in her. We called her an awful woman once,' and she paused to laugh at the recollection, then stole a glance at Bet to see how Bet took it.

Evidently a new and happy idea had occurred to Bet. She lifted her head and faced her unconscious tormentor boldly.

'Indeed we did, Lady Blanche. We were quite as much prejudiced against the whole family as you—I mean, as anyone could possibly be. We made game of them because we—we did not understand them.'

('Not altogether that,' muttered her sister, aside. 'We understood them, but we were not hoodwinked by them. We saw; now we are blind.')

'There is an unmarried brother, is there not?'

The next moment the speaker, Lady Blanche, uttered a sharp, sudden cry. 'Oh, my dear Leonora, how dreadful of you! What have you been doing to these salts? I did but lift the lid and I am half killed. Oh dear, oh dear! Where is my handkerchief? Where is my——?'

She could think of nothing else, but in the bustle everyone was looking at herself, and the burning blush on Bet's cheek might be supposed unseen.

'Never, never as long as I live will I be so left to myself as to venture rashly upon one of those full-charged battering-rams again,' proceeded her ladyship, chattering for dear life; 'don't touch them, my dears; they are Leonora's wicked, mischievous——'

'My dear Auntie!' The gentle Leonora looked absolutely confounded. Never had she known such a fuss, and what was it about? The bottle of salts always stood at Lady Blanche's elbow, on her pet table, together with her eye-glasses, letters, and the book she was reading. And to her certain knowledge it had not been freshly supplied. 'Never mind, never mind,' cried the aggrieved party, cutting short asseverations. 'That's what people always say. Nobody did it. Come along out of doors, everybody;' and, passing her arm through Bet's, she led the way.

'Lucky for Bet,' reflected Georgie. She had no idea, nor had anyone else, what it all meant.

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They were shown the gardens, the shrubberies, the pretty nooks, views, summer-houses, rustic seats; finally a game of croquet was arranged, and Lionel, arriving at seven o'clock, found this in full swing.

We need not describe the rest of the evening; suffice it to say that it passed to the satisfaction of all, and that a return match, or series of matches, was arranged for the following day.

'When *he* will be with us, perhaps,' whispered Bet to herself; and from having been rather *distrait* and absent-minded during the previous hours, she woke up at the leave-taking. It was so nice to be going home; such a relief to have the long, blank day over—the day in which it was known that nothing could happen. Now she might begin to expect again. She made a dart inside directly the hall door was reached, and her eye went like an arrow to the table whereon there might be a letter.

But no letter was there.

'Anyone been here, Simmins?'

'No one, miss.'

How ridiculous she was! Had she not herself told him, had they not altogether and each severally told him, of the Henham monopoly, precisely its length and breadth? Yet here was she feeling actually disappointed and disconcerted because he had too well respected the sanctity of the occasion! She sang a little snatch of a song, and tripped upstairs merrily.

Yet when Georgie came to bed—having lingered awhile to talk over this and that with Lionel, and show him openly that she was on his side; pouring forth such unqualified, unstinted praise of everything she had seen and done, that insensibly he was drawn to responding and encouraging—when she at length followed Bet, she found matters only a degree better in the *solitude à deux* than on the previous night.

Bet said it was late, and she was tired, and would talk in the morning.

Indeed, the poor girl was weary from feverish excitement and lack of natural repose, since she had hardly had a wink the night before. From sheer exhaustion she fell into a heavy slumber directly her head touched the pillow.

Bright and early she awoke, however, all joyous anticipation; and no sooner had Lionel betaken himself off—from which point his sisters' day began—than the two younger ones were accosted by the elder, in accents of friendly command.

'Now we must prepare the house,' said she; 'we were taken

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by surprise when the Massiturs called, and there were old flowers in the vases, and nothing nice; but we will make up for it to-day. Poll, you might speak to Robert, and see if he cannot muster a dish of fruit. I know he will say there is none, but there is. There are some half-ripe figs and some waspy greengages. Never mind if they are not very good to eat; they will do to look at; put plenty of leaves over them. Georgie, will you see to the croquet ground?'

'I can't do it myself. You must help me to measure.'

'Well, by-and-by. But first I want to bring in some ferns from the wood; leave the croquet business, and get in the flowers.'

'Now? At nine o'clock? Won't it do after luncheon?'

But Bet was quite sure it would not do even before luncheon. 'I have thought it all out,' said she, decisively. 'If we have all that part finished before the heat of the day, we can see to our clothes.'

'What is there to see to? We are to put on the same as we did yesterday, I suppose?'

'My lace is limp, and so is yours, from being out in the dew. You shall have some out of the box——'

'*No!*'

'You shall; and Poll, too. The time has come for using it. We can never want it more——'

'Poll, do you hear? We are to have lace out of the box,' cried Georgie, running after Poll's retreating figure. 'The box is to disgorge at last. This good old Bet says so. She is going to hand round——'

'Only enough for to-day,' warned Bet, smiling.

'To be sure; only for to-day. "For though on pleasure she was bent, she had a frugal mind,"' quoted her sister. 'Come along, old Frugality.'

'And you must not be seizing upon the very fine ones,' proceeded Bet, coming along. 'Mechlin and Rose Point aren't for girls like us; the others will be quite good enough. And I think I shall ask Lady Blanche about them,' suddenly appended she.

After a moment she continued: 'The one good thing Aunt Sophia did was to teach me a little about old lace and how it ought to be kept, and never washed, and all that. For once in her life she played us fair, when I offered her the whole of it, do you remember? It was on a day when she had been even more

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down upon us than usual, enumerating all she had done for us, and insinuating that we were miserable creatures who could make no sort of return, that I hurled it at her head.'

'You offered her our mother's lace?' said Poll, who had either never heard or had forgotten. 'Well, I must say!—You might have asked us first. I suppose it belongs to us all,' in somewhat aggrieved accents.

'And the obligation belonged to us all,' replied Bet, shortly. 'I had to act for the three. And you two never disputed what I did.'

'Nor will we now. Poll, be nice. Don't start a grievance at this time of day,' exhorted Georgie, acting peacemaker as usual. 'Of course, Bet couldn't let old Sophia bang us to pieces if she had a chance of banging back. She was quite right to let every rag of lace or anything else go for the sake of one good whack. Go on, Bet; tell us how she took it. I should have thought she would have grabbed at it.'

'I thought so. We know how she grabbed at other things. And though I knew nothing about lace, I could see that some she had on one day, which she thought a great deal of and showed to all her friends, was nothing like as good as some of mother's. It was the same kind, but not nearly, oh, not nearly so fine. That put the idea into my head. Well, I took the box to her—what a funny little girl I must have looked, marching up with it and an angry face——'

'I can see you, Bet; can't you, Poll?'

'But I meant to do it grandly, so I had a speech ready. I forget what it was, but you should have seen Aunt Sophia's look of petrifaction as she listened. I wonder if she was tempted? No, I don't think she was; I think she was appalled by the extremity of the case. I remember she came close up to me and looked into my eyes, and said something about my being "mad." Then she opened the box, made me sit down beside her, and went through every single thing in it. She pointed out the different kinds and their value, and made me learn it off as if it were a lesson. With her mittened finger she pointed, and I had to say, "Brussels, Honiton, Alençon, Old Point, Rose Point"—till I was quite perfect. Then I had to fetch a yard-measure, and measure the length of each piece, and write that and a full description on a slip of paper, which I had to pin to the piece. She was most particular that *I* should take the measure, and do the writing and pinning *myself*; she said I was old enough,

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and that I was always to recollect that I had done it with my own hands. Aunt Sophia never could bear me, nor I her; but on that one afternoon we were quite friendly; and when it was all done she said, "There; now lock the box, and never give anyone else the chance you gave me; they might not be so——" I forget the word she used; but if it was "honest," she must have had a queer idea of what "honest" means. I should call Aunt Sophia the most dishonest——'

'Never mind that; go on with the story.' Georgie loved a story.

Bet mused a moment. 'I was only thinking. I wonder what it could have been which for once moved that hard, miserly woman to be so unlike herself? You should have seen her as she hung and gloated over those old yellow bundles; and I can't but think it was my utter ignorance and helplessness which disarmed her. She could nip and pick, and pry and steal all round the place; but our old lace! And I know she loved it, and must have coveted it.'

'Is it so wonderful, then?'

'Come and see,' said Bet, leading the way. 'After all, we shall still have time to get the flowers and fruit, and arrange the croquet ground, before the sun gets too hot. It is a glorious morning; it is going to be a glorious day,' cried she, her whole face in a glow as she ran upstairs.

The box was produced, and all three gathered round it. They had not seen even its outside for years, and in the interim a certain amount of taste and experience had been acquired.

'Do you know,' said Bet, looking round, 'I never noticed before that it is rather a nice box. After Aunt Sophia made such a fuss—for she was frightfully gone on the box as well as on the lace—I supposed that it was good, though I did not care twopence about it for my part—but now I do think—what do *you* think——?' holding at arm's length the old-fashioned receptacle.

'It does seem rather well worked,' said Poll, peering closer.

'But the colours have faded almost away,' said Georgie.

'Still, I like it,' said Bet.

And this was all; and the beautiful relic of other days, with its delicate blending of hues and its exquisite workmanship—wreaths of rosebuds upon white satin—which, to do the late Mrs. Colvin justice, she had treasured and appreciated, it having come down to her through several generations—was opened without

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more ado by these insensate young creatures, intent upon the spoil within.

'Now remember, there's to be no snatching,' said Bet, solemnly. 'I shan't unlock unless you promise,' key in hand.

'Only you won't make me take a horrid old valuable yellow bit,' bargained Georgie. 'I know that kind. I want something effective; get on,' growing impatient.

'I'm getting on,' Bet very slowly unlocking. 'You do promise?'

She was so like the masterful, authority-loving Bet of old, that Georgie would have promised anything.

And she gave them what they wanted, and more than they wanted. Then she drew out a long, soft cobweb of priceless value, so fine that she could have crushed it to nothing in her fingers, gazed reverently, and put it back.

'You like that? Have it, Bet;' Georgie was watching her sister.

'Yes, have it;' added Poll, carelessly. She was delighted with her own selection, and was busy puckering and posturing before the glass.

'N—no,' said Bet, shaking her head.

'But why not, if you like it? We are each to have what we like. Poll and I have chosen, why should you not choose? There, have it.'

'I should be worse than Aunt Sophia if I did,' said Bet, and she replaced the scarf. '*She* would not take advantage of my ignorance; what should I be like if I took advantage of yours? This is one of the most valuable pieces here. It shall be for the first who marries.'

She said it without thinking; the next moment she could have bitten her tongue out.

For without a word first one sister and then the other slipped from the room, and she was left alone, and knew that she was alone.

And knew what she had said, and how it had been taken.

And there she sat upon the floor in the sunshine, with the scattered laces around her, left to take what she would; and a strange sadness fell upon her heart, and there was a momentary feeling that she would have given all and everything—almost everything besides—to be as she had once been. . . .

But the feeling passed, and no one was more sociable and companionable than Bet throughout the remainder of the morning.

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Instead of going off by herself, basket in hand, to bring in moss and ferns from the wood, as she had originally designed to do, she must needs take both sisters along with her and make a frolic of the whole proceeding. Then she would have them rob the garden and the garden wall in company. Poll brought glasses, Georgie jugs of water, while Bet cut and snipped and arranged and trimmed.

Together they set out the croquet lawn, and carried to a good position their one garden bench.

When all was complete, they sewed and stitched side by side upstairs—Poll being exhorted to bring her things along and sit with the others, 'So that we can all consult and judge,' pronounced Bet.

But in reality she was struggling to feel the old days back again, conscious that they had gone, gone forever.

(*To be continued.*)

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Country Teaching for Country Schools.

AS it would be idle to recommend even the simplest and most natural remedy unless there was proof positive of disease, it is desirable, before offering a suggestion, to show there is something seriously wrong with our rural population. In point of fact, I do not believe that it would be denied by anyone qualified to form an opinion. Statesmen, as they belong to this party or to that, differ as to the cure, but agree upon the salient facts. One theory may be held in the rectory or vicarage, another in the dissenter's manse, but they are based on the same premises. Protectionist and free-trader—all the most divergent sections of the community—unite in admitting that the present condition of our rustics constitutes a grave national weakness.

Let us try to ascertain exactly what the circumstances are. Broadly speaking the home population of Great Britain may be ranged in two sections. One is devoted to commerce, and may be pictured as an innumerable army of artisans and workmen, and factory hands, shopkeepers and clerks. From them issue the mechanical inventions, the cheap clothes and goods of all sorts that promote civilisation by increasing material comfort. But the labour is accomplished under hard conditions. Those who pursue it are bound to congregate in large towns, they spend most of their time shut off from the pure air, in shop, factory, and office; life with them is tense and feverish under the stress of competition, even in their amusements is much that increases the wear and tear of nerve. Were a body of them walled in, and compelled to marry only among those of their own profession, pale artisan with anæmic factory girl, delicate clerk with equally delicate type-writing girl, grocer's assistant with milliner or dressmaker, how quickly would the race decay! What keeps them in health and vigour is a continuous inflow of fresh blood. Commerce, with its full, intense life, its outlook, scope, and magnificent prizes, has abundant attractions for the recruits necessary to it.

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The other section of the people is engaged in agriculture, and is to be found in cosy village and quiet hamlet, in farmhouse, grange, steading, hut and cottage. They are a broad-shouldered, tranquil folk, going serenely about garth and in lowland, tending sheep, feeding oxen, and growing the fruits of the earth. Ruddy of cheek, clear of eye, and slow of movement, one might think them indolent were it not that the energy which seems to have been economised for several generations will suddenly break out in some youth who, forsaking the calling of his father, thrusts out into the wider reaches of life. It is well that it should be so. The still and quiet agricultural population is a national reservoir of strength. Its primary function was to provide food; but of no less importance—of much greater importance to-day, when the greater part of our food is imported—is its invigoration of those pale battalions of commerce. On previous occasions, when the life of the country was wasted by war and famine—after the Peninsular War for instance—the rural population poured recruits alike into the military and the commercial ranks.

Obviously, then, if the body politic were in a healthy condition it would possess an abundant and contented rural population, of which the overplus, consisting only of individuals specially fitted for commerce, would be continually passing to the towns. But this is so far from being the case that on the farms there is an actual famine of labour. In some instances land has been laid down to grass because of the low prices of corn; but in many others because ploughmen and other workers could not be procured; dairies have had to be broken up for lack of milkers; standing crops sold because reapers could not be found. Some years ago I showed after prolonged investigation that, with scarcely an exception, every purely agricultural district of England was undergoing an absolute loss of population. The movement then was most pronounced in remote counties; its effects are keenly felt to-day in districts close to the great centres of population.

Nor must we consider these phenomena as peculiar to one country. What has been said about the value of a healthy peasantry has been the experience of all nations—of Germany, France, Switzerland, Austria—as well as England. More or less each is called upon to study the same problem. But that should not discourage us. In matters of progress our country has generally led the van, and if we have lagged behind during recent years all the more reason for making a strenuous effort now.

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In connection with this rural exodus another thing has to be taken into account. It is accompanied, even on the part of those who remain, by a heavy, listless indifference to rural life and labour. No complaint is more common, or more fully supported by facts, than that farm labourers have ceased to take any interest in their work. They will not so much as attempt to learn the more difficult tasks of the farm, and the simple duties allotted to them are carelessly performed. It was not always so. I can myself remember when a young ploughman would take a delight in making his lea furrows as straight as if drawn on paper with a ruler, and the rustics were proud of the neatness shown alike in drill and corn-rick. The slovenliness that has succeeded only partially indicates the loss of interest on the part of the young generation, and how little liking there is in these days for the pastoral life old poets sang of. It is incomprehensible to one who takes account of alternative forms of hard labour. A man who from January to December is engaged say in making uppers in a boot factory, or in tending a machine, might be understood if towards Christmas he began to think life monotonous. A bricklayer's labourer may weary of his hod. Probably even an engrossing clerk does not find his task exhilarating. Work, in fact, is always dull save where it can be performed with something of an artist's spirit. The agricultural labourer, however, has advantages beyond most. It may be true that he has not reached a point of culture whereat he can discern 'A splendour in the grass, a glory in the flower'; it may be true that spring flowers and autumn leaves, winter's snow and summer's rain, pass indifferently, except as they affect his physical comfort; but, still, his work is full of change, every season bringing its peculiar task:—'To reap and to sow, To plough and to mow.' No doubt he must face a great deal of bitter weather, but he also enjoys much sunshine; and if he really takes no pleasure in his surroundings, if the birds and beasts that are his fieldmates excite no interest, if he has no curiosity about the little tender flowers and plants that shyly peep forth in spring, and gather in thronging multitudes with the advance of summer, his education has gone on lines that are completely wrong. He may have received a great deal more 'schooling' than his forefathers, but his eyes have not been trained to see or his ears to hear.

No one who has carefully looked into the matter is likely to deny that much has been well and wisely done for the peasant during the last fifty years; but the question is whether the zeal

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for reform was not a little too sweeping. Much of the evil of the past was abolished, but did not some of the good go too? The rustic of the early half of the century does not in every point compare unfavourably with him of to-day. In his smock and wooden clogs he was not so well clothed. When wheat ranged from seventy shillings to six guineas a quarter bread could not have been so good and plentiful as it is when half as much is reckoned almost a famine price. His house was a hovel, and large adult families commonly lived and slept in one room. At a wedding he generally had to sign with a cross. That his condition has been improved in these respects ought to be thankfully acknowledged. But with all those disadvantages he was a better and more contented farm-servant than his successor of to-day. He made a kind of art of his calling, and British agriculture was first in the whole world. Nor were the conditions so cast-iron but that the energetic and qualified labourer could find means to educate himself, and embark on a career suitable to his talents. In the north, at any rate, many flourishing farming families were then founded, and some of the most distinguished men of the era sprang from the ploughtail.

Education was regarded as a luxury. The average child was sent to earn wages almost as soon as it could toddle. You see it in the case of George Stephenson 'herdin' kye' at six for twopence a day, Cobbett sent bird-scaring with his wooden clapper earlier than he could remember, and plenty of other illustrations may be found in the well-known report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the conditions of women and children engaged in agriculture. There are old men and women still alive to testify that in their youth the father of a large family could not afford them more than a winter's—or at the most, two winters'—schooling. But education is not altogether dependent on books. It is a matter of history that those neglected urchins became good and intelligent labourers, and that a select few rose above their surroundings and left a mark upon their time. The reason is that an out-door life is in itself a training of intelligence. A boy may be taught to observe and to think without as much as opening a book.

So much can be said without in any way depreciating the lore of school and college. He who lacks it is poor indeed. At the present moment I know a Cheviot shepherd who can neither read nor write, and who is nevertheless regarded as among the wisest of his fellows. He can decipher as no one else can the signs of

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the sky, and foretell the approach of wind or rain. Walking over the hills he can spell out in the most wonderful way the writing left by beast and bird. Of plants and their virtues few know so much, and should any doubt or difficulty arise among the sparse and simple hill-folk, he is applied to with full confidence in his shrewd natural sagacity. Who would dare to call him uneducated? And yet how much he has lost from being shut out from that world of knowledge concealed in the printed page! He is incomplete. The right use of books is to enlarge, correct, and supplement the practical knowledge acquired from life.

This shepherd is a favourable type of the past wherein there was more practice than theory—what have we in the present? Let us try to realise the life of an urchin from a labourer's cottage. At five or six, instead of being sent out to 'shoo the craws' he is despatched to school. Extraordinary as it may seem, there is no guarantee that the man or woman set to teach him possesses the slightest acquaintance with those country pursuits for which school should be a preparation. We are being taught by dire necessity that for the industrial classes it is no sufficient education to be able to work sums in arithmetic, to write from dictation, and to know a certain number of names and dates. A technical training—that is to say, a training of hand and eye—is necessary if they are to hold their own with foreign competitors. In an artisan's son this joins on to what he is able to pick up at home, but there is no binding link whatever between the home life and the schooling of a peasant's child. For six or eight years he has to grind through 'standards' utterly divorced from his natural surroundings, and is taught in exactly the same way as those destined for a town life. Education is a misnomer for what he has received; information, instruction if you will, has been crammed into him, but it has not become an essential part of his being; and as a matter of fact, those best qualified to speak attest how astonishing is the rapidity with which it is all forgotten when he goes to work.

The reason is that his interest never has been roused or his understanding quickened. Hence the listnessness and indifference, the feeling of intolerable dulness with which he begins to work. To overcome this is the problem of the hour, and there are differences in regard to the best method. Some time ago, for instance, a writer in the *Athenæum*, evidently one of practical experience, advocated 'an earlier introduction to manual labour,' probably meaning an increase of half-timers, a system fatal to

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education. There is something hallowed in childhood, be it of peer or peasant, and there is no duty more incumbent upon those that are grown up than that of shielding and guarding the very young, and especially the children of the poor, from the pressure of care and labour that comes all too soon in any case. To follow the advice referred to were to retrace our steps and yield up what progress has secured—to say nothing of certain doubts as to the efficacy of hoeing potatoes as a means of stimulating interest.

There seems to be a more natural and pleasant outlet from the difficulty. It was touched upon in January by Sir John Lubbock —one has not yet got into the way of using his new title. He thinks country subjects should be taught in country schools, and mentioned botany as a suitable one. This, it seems to me, is on the right line, provided it is not done out of books. A time no doubt arrives in any serious study when it would be absurd to pursue it without them, but practice ought to go before theory, and many a would-be student of botany has been discouraged at the outset by a forbidding array of terms and definitions. The object to be attained in this instance is not primarily information, but the quickening of interest. You want to make the pursuit a kind of pastime, deepening into something more earnest only in the case of such older pupils as show a taste for the subject. It will be enough at first, and a magnificent basis for later work, if the pupils be taught to find and name the common wild flowers, the grasses and clovers, the rushes and weeds of their locality. They have to know their county—let them know their fields as well. Every school should have a plot of ground for real object lessons and actual experiment. The knowledge thus acquired in the open air would be a valued possession even to those who afterwards went to live in town, and much more so to everyone who stayed at home. It was to a great extent possessed by the elder generation, and has been utterly lost since the establishment of board schools. The average villager—one might almost say every villager—is ignorant of the old names for plants, indeed he does not know them at all, never pays them the slightest attention. All the beautiful life that begins when the coltsfoot flowers and has not ended when autumn gales are rocking and stripping the brilliantly hued trees, is to him who cannot see it only part of the dulness of the country. The utilitarian aspect of the matter is too patent to require comment at a time when botany is doing so much for agriculture; witness the discovery, now a few years old, of the nitrification of the

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soil by leguminous plants, and the results obtained by the Messrs. Garton from crossing cereals.

Entomology is even a more suitable subject for our purpose. The cottage boy knows something about it almost by instinct, and therefore advances easily from the known to the unknown. In the cottage garden or allotment it is extremely likely that there will be a hive or two of bees. Possibly enough, one of his earliest associations is of a pleasant afternoon in autumn when his father smokes his superfluous skeps and buries the tiny workers in the earth. Little he recks of that as, all sticky and happy, he sits on the rail or doorstep devouring a lump of honeycomb! But there is something to quicken his budding thought even here. Very likely his next-door neighbour has abandoned this wasteful and destructive method, and keeps all his bees through the winter in a large bar-frame hive. If he is a member of the county society he has probably crossed the English brown bee with Ligurian or Syrian bees, of which he has learned from the *Bee Journal*.

There may not be much suitable to juvenile teaching in bee-keeping itself (though children would readily interest themselves in wasps and wild bees), but it is only one department of a large subject. Moths and butterflies will afford wider scope for their curiosity. Very few children do not take very readily to what the Americans call 'bug-hunting.' And it yields a knowledge calculated to be of peculiar service to rustics. Even a ploughboy nowadays usually has a plot of ground to cultivate for himself, and fruit is a favourite crop. It yields what is, perhaps, the best return for a small outlay of labour. But the owner has a very confused idea of what influences determine the result. Some, living much closer to London than might be supposed, continue to think that the apples and pears and berries come by grace of the fairies, and in spring, half in faith, partly in laughter, repeat to their trees an incantation that was serious enough once. Others, of comparatively advanced thought, make a great fire of chaff under the orchard trees in March, trying to get rid of injurious insects by the smoke. It may be said that for the worst of these pests science has not yet discovered an effectual remedy. Those of my Kentish friends who keep well abreast of discovery appear to change their faith annually—one season vowing that some new and patent grease-band is the only preventative, and the next pinning their faith to a spray. Nevertheless, exact knowledge is always extending its boundaries and diminish-

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ing the region of vagueness and guesswork. Recognising this, the Board of Agriculture from time to time issues the most admirable leaflets giving precise and clear information about any specially injurious moth or other insect. Is it not evident that a boy (or girl) who has been trained to observe, even encouraged to collect caterpillars, find out their food-plant, nurse and feed them till they turn into chrysalides, and preserve these till the perfect insect is developed, will be in a favourable position to grasp the point of the monograph and take full advantage of it? This, however, is a bread-and-butter consideration, and not of the first importance. The fitness of entomology as a subject for country schools rests on the fact that it may easily be made an alluring compound of pastime and study, it may be pursued at little or no expense, it takes children out into the open air, and it lends interest and charm to field and wayside. Any attempt to impart a purely utilitarian character to the education of young children is bound to defeat its own object. They 'fleet the time away as they did in the golden age' and do not worry about profit and loss. They neither value nor comprehend dodges to stop those insect ravages which their fathers compendiously name 'blight,' that will follow naturally if first of all pains be taken to quicken understanding of and enlarge sympathy with the life that will greet their eyes in the days to come when they are toiling in garth or meadow.

Where one is only throwing out suggestions, not elaborating a detailed scheme, it would be out of place to go too minutely into the various branches of this or any other subject, easy as it would be to show in how many ways it could be made at once a pleasing pastime and a useful study. Nor need words be wasted to recommend a science so attractive as ornithology. As far as it is concerned, it would almost appear as if there had been a conspiracy to keep the country boy steeped in ignorance, while on the other hand the Board of Agriculture has been at special pains to give information to his elders. I have loved birds all my life, and dislike to see them either abused or placed in captivity, but it seems to me that county councils and other authorities have recently shown a good deal of maudlin sentiment in the way of over-protection. The country boy is hedged in with too many restrictions. His grandfather had a run of sport that helped him to endure country life. He had a gun and some chance of using it, while his successor scarcely knows stock from barrel, as the nation has found out to its cost; he made himself an angle and could go fishing in the brook, whereas every wretched streamlet

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appears now to be claimed by some angling association or other. He had free scope to go birds'-nesting, and this pastime, too, is being denied to youth. A consequence is that he has come to look upon a cheap trip to town as his only amusement. To him the country is only a place wherein to dig potatoes. Theatres, music-halls, and concert-rooms are excellent institutions in their place, but attendance at them does not conduce to a steady nerve, a sure eye, a strong arm. Every healthy child or adult needs relaxation as well as work, and a wise scheme of education will provide an attractive substitute for every rustic pastime of which the people have been deprived.

That changes such as have been indicated are desirable scarcely admits of doubt; the remaining question is, Are they practicable? Our present arrangements are only for teaching what is required in commerce. Agriculture does indeed appear among specific subjects, but to very little purpose. Teachers are not trained or inspectors appointed on the assumption that it will be any part of their duties to prepare children for rustic pursuits. Even in the continuation schools, where one might expect the serious study of agriculture and horticulture to be entered upon, the county councils go on encouraging commercial education. Yet if the idea be right, if, that is to say, an outdoor education ought to have a place as well as an indoor one, its application cannot be impossible. Before adopting it, however, a practical legislature will inquire if the advantage offered be worth the price to be paid.

I am not so sanguine as to believe that it is sufficient in itself to arrest the rural exodus. As long as trade retains its present high pitch of prosperity, the attractions of town life, combined with a prospect of remunerative employment, will outweigh all that the peasant can at present look forward to, low wages, indifferent housing, hard work, and few holidays. But it is only one of several steps that will have to be taken if we are to retain on the land a population sufficient to make up for the wear and tear of cities. The only motive absolutely certain to make the labourer stay on the land, and it would be childish to disguise it, is a reasonable opportunity of attaining to a position of comfort, and rising, if he have the capacity, to independence. Farm labourers have not advanced in equal step with other portions of the toiling community. Free trade, that has been so great a blessing to the factory operative, bringing in its train cheap food, cheap clothes, and all the material comforts that precede moral progress, has been his bane. It has produced a state of affairs wherein a farmer,

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be his needs ever so urgent, be labour ever so scarce, has not the power of raising his wages. That is the length and breadth of the situation. Nevertheless, it is so essential to imperial health and welfare to have on the land a larger population than exists at present, that no effort, public or private, should be spared to effect that purpose. What direction this should take is a matter too complicated for discussion here, even though, as I believe, there is scarcely room for difference of opinion. The question of education, however, rests entirely upon its own basis, and would do so if there were no rural exodus at all. The object of country teaching for country schools is to awaken an interest in natural objects, to lay a foundation on which scientific knowledge may be afterwards built, and to impart to country folk habits of observation and some knowledge of their surroundings. They are at present dull chiefly because they are ignorant of the very things amid which their lives are passed. The school is not a suitable preparation.

No very profound study is necessary to enable the schoolmaster to bring these subjects into his curriculum, though I would be the last to advocate any vague, woolly mooning in the name of education. Indeed, it would give teaching a grip of actuality such as at present it does not possess. For example, a child draws a map of, let us say, his own country. He has no means of comparing the copy with the original. Let him draw the village street or an adjacent field, and the whole process of map-drawing is illuminated. If he can name and identify the various weeds, grasses, and wild flowers to be gathered along the hedgerows of these same fields, tell what butterflies and moths come fluttering along it in the sunshine, what wild birds nest in the branches, what little animals find refuge among the roots, he has obtained that nucleus of exact and thoroughly appreciated knowledge round which it will be easy in the future to arrange the new facts and deeper information that books will disclose. In other words, he is beginning with the solid and practical, and proceeding to book and theory only when his own observation is exhausted, and his personal knowledge will carry him no further. It is to be feared that he does not stand alone in reversing this process—to compare small things with great. In his little way he has book knowledge poured into him without a basis of experience to give it reality, just as generals born and bred in a time of peace may teem with book strategy and tactics, that only mislead till they are corrected and enlarged by the stern experience of war.

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To oblige schoolmasters to prepare themselves to deal with things as well as ideas is not at all likely to do them harm, but good. One hears complaints frequently enough that they have to work up many subjects that are entirely useless in the practice of their profession. If need be, some of these could be discarded in favour of natural science. At any rate, it could be no burden for them to acquire the very elementary knowledge which is all that it would be desirable to impart in the first instance. But surely the Education Department could easily make these arrangements, and also see that the inspectors are not themselves 'all book.' I am glad to see from a speech recently made by Sir John Gorst that the views here set forth appear to be warmly approved by the Department, which is only waiting for practical suggestions. The influential Committee presided over by Sir W. Hart Dyke, and of which Mr. Henry Hobhouse, M.P., is the honorary secretary, has been formed for the express purpose of bringing the ideas into workable shape; and it is being widely recognised that this question goes to the very root of our imperial welfare. It is not the peasant child alone who is being smothered in books, routine, and red-tape. That is obviously a fault of our entire civilisation.

P. ANDERSON GRAHAM.

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My Starlings—April.

MY starlings! Your singing
Is in my memory ringing;
With a voice that knew no sadness,
With each note a song of gladness,
You sought the self-same tree
Every morn to welcome me.
Then there came a bitter cold,
And your little tale was told.
When the day had sprung from dawn,
You lay dead upon the lawn,
On the lawn you loved so well,
When the day to noontide fell.
Though the young of your upbringing
Have taken up your singing,
How I miss with every day
Your first-loved roundelay.

WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK.

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A Penitent.

IT was high noon in the New Zealand bush. The great silence was made only the more impressive by the little breaks of sound—the rippling of the stream or an occasional tui flitting overhead, with a gush of melody. Scarcely a leaf stirred in all that green wilderness. Here and there, where a shaft of sunlight had found its way through, spotted lizards lay basking among the dry leaves and fragments of brown and silvery bark that covered the moist black earth on every side. Above were myriads of leaves and branches; below, myriads of ferns. The stately tree ferns towered up above the gravel bed of the stream, and in every gully by tens and hundreds the ferns multiplied and grew. Life was so rampant here as to hide death and decay. If a tree fell to-day one would expect to find it green to-morrow with ferns and young suckers. There seemed something almost savage and unnatural in this swarming luxuriance of life, this insistence of growth. A touch of quiet autumn would have come as a benediction. In such an hour one feels most the mystery and the solemn grandeur of the bush.

Presently a man came limping into sight. He was covered with dust from head to foot, and the great beads of perspiration rolling down his face had made runlets through the dust, and gave him a strange, ghastly look. His eyes were like those of a hunted animal; his tongue lolled out in the heat like a dog's.

He made straight for the stream, and painfully scrambling down the edge of the gully, among ferns and creepers, he flung himself over the water and drank eagerly, laving his face in the stream as he drank. Then he drew a deep breath of relief, and lay back, his arms behind his head, in a state of exhaustion.

He had thrown aside his hat; and his hair, wet with sweat, lay limply on his brow. He was a stalwartly built fellow, with a keen hard face, and hands roughened by years of toil. His clothes

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were old and rough; on the knee of one trouser was a stain like that of recently spilt blood.

As he lay pillowed among delicate fern fronds, still hot, and panting now and then, a wild pigeon came close above him on a fallen tree bough. The mild, innocent creature looked at him with its full red eye, and showed no sign of perturbation: its kind had not yet learned to be afraid of man. This man lay and watched it awhile in silence. His eye marked its one beauty after another: its broad snowy breast, its red bill, the lovely mingling of green, red, and purple on its wings and back. He had opportunity to examine it fully, for it sat there with great composure only now and then pulling off a green leaf and eating it. At last the man reached out his hand for a big pebble: he could knock it down easily, without changing his position. He had his hand ready to throw, when a swift compunction seized him, and he flung the pebble crashing through the distant underwood.

'No, I'm darned,' he muttered, 'if I can hurt the pretty, innocent thing after all!'

At the noise of the falling pebble the bird rose with a loud whirr of its magnificent wings, and passed on to another tree. The man was sorry; he wished it had stayed where it was, that he might watch it. Then things gradually grew indistinct, and he fell asleep as easily as a child.

He slept heavily for a time. Then his sleep became broken, dreams troubled him—ugly dreams of things that had happened since this summer sun rose.

Again he was at the little village public-house, smoking and drinking with his mate Bill Harris. The drink was bad, but the day was hot, and both men thirsty after hours of work in the scorching sun. Then they turned out again, going back to their felling and sawing of timber. And as they went a quarrel sprang up between them and grew fierce. Then Bill in an unhappy moment reminded his mate Jack of the 30*l.* he had been owing him these months past. This brought Jack's wrath to a climax; he raised the axe he was carrying and struck Bill, who fell like a log on the dusty road, the blood spouting from his wound. Jack knelt down and gazed stupidly: Bill was dead. The shock sobered him on the instant. He dragged the dead man into the shade of the bushes, and fled for his life, feeling the hot breath of the avengers behind him every second.

Bill dead? Bill? Oh, confound it all, no! Things were getting mixed up in his brain. It was he himself who had been

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ill for weeks together in the winter—nigh at death's door—and Bill had nursed him and waited on him with the tenderness of a woman. Yes, it was Bill who had saved his life—brave, honest old Bill, who had faced sun and storm with him for three years past. Ay, he was such a mate as a fellow didn't often chance to get. And then to say that he was dead! Oh, how absurd!

Wildly thoughts and images floated through his brain, leaving only a dim haunting sense of trouble. Then he slipped back to the English meadows of his childhood—daisy-sprinkled grass, and a grey river edged with pollard willows that broke into green loveliness every spring. How well he remembered it all! He used to bathe there as a boy, and dream of striking out bravely for himself in the great river of life. The skies above him were not higher than his aspirations. And now it had all come to this —that he had struck down his friend, and the word MURDERER was written in letters of fire across his soul!

He shivered, drew a long breath, and awoke. There was a refreshing undercurrent of coolness in the air, and golden lights slanted down among the ferns. It must be evening, then. He looked at his watch; it was five o'clock. He rose, still shivering a little, and looked round him. What should he do? Self-preservation urged him to some immediate course, but where had he best turn for safety?

He stumbled on listlessly for awhile, swearing hard now and again at the tangles of creeper and brambles through which he had to force his way. All at once he stood stock still, trembling in every limb. He rubbed his hand across his eyes to assure himself that he was not dreaming, and then grew a worse feeling—that madness had come upon him. He had often heard of murderers being haunted by the corpses of their victims, and ah! here the ghastly thing had come upon him! Bill's body lay almost at his feet, and already it was overarched by long, luxuriant ferns.

He knelt down with a little stifled cry and hid his face. When he looked again IT was still there; but as he looked a sudden ray of hope darted into his mind. This thing wore a coarse plaid. It could not be Bill. The sudden overpowering sense of relief made him sick and dizzy. Then recovering himself, he examined the body carefully, with a new gentleness of touch and a new reverence. Slowly he identified it as that of an old stockman who had lived in a lonely hut on the ranges; and then the whole story came back to him. The man had gone away to town, and nothing further had ever been heard of him. He

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had lived so solitary a life that he had not been missed at once, and little wonder was raised when he was, for he was known to be a queer, erratic being. He was believed to have no relations on this side of the world, and public opinion conjectured that he had taken ship and gone home to his people. And here he had perished, far from all kindly human sounds, in this mockery of green, silent beauty. It made Jack shudder afresh.

In the dead man's pocket-book he found crisp bank-notes for 50*l*. Good God! Had he had these yesterday, he had not now been a murderer! He bowed his head, then started up wildly, for he seemed to hear footsteps gathering all round him, and voices accusing him from every tree. In an agony of fear his resolution was taken. He would take this man's clothes, and personate him in his hermit's hut till the crime had blown over sufficiently for him to slip off to Australia with safety. Anything rather than be taken!

It was nearly midnight when he reached the deserted sod hut, for he was footsore and weary and walked but slowly. It was a cloudless summer night, and the moon was at her full. Under such skies as these even the rugged hills looked lovely, folded into soft, ample curves in the quiet moonlight. And the nodding tussocks in Jack's eyes looked far more friendly and beautiful than the wonderful shimmering ferns he had left. He pushed open the door of the hut and went in, a cobweb catching his brow as he did so. He struck a match and looked round him. All was neat and in good order as the dead man had left it. His blankets were rolled up in one corner, the kettle swung over the empty fireplace, and a pipe with some tobacco was on the shelf above. There was a cupboard, too, with some cheese, tea, flour, and a mouldy loaf in it. The sight of food reminded Jack that he had had nothing since—since that last drink with his chum. Was it only years ago, or in some other existence?

He brought water from the little spring by the door, built up the fire, and put the kettle on to make tea. Then he made himself some 'damper,' and took his meal with relish. He was not used to fast so long. After that he sat smoking awhile, then put out the tallow dip, rolled himself up in the blankets, and slept fitfully till morning.

His scheme was perfectly successful. The days passed on in monotonous succession, and no man came near his city of refuge. Once or twice he ventured down to the township on the other side of the hills to replenish his stock of necessaries. Few people

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knew him there, and no one eyed him askance as he came and went. Still had he been a prisoner, living on the poorest fare, it could not have changed him more. His cheeks began to fall in; he was haggard and gaunt; his bloodshot eyes had a strained, listening look in them. Among the bare, bleak hills by day, and alone beneath the illimitable stars by night, his mind began to totter. As every summer sun sprang up, red and glorious, he almost hoped that a policeman would come for him before night and break this awful spell of loneliness. His was not the plight of the Ancient Mariner, sailing a sea so lonely that God Himself scarce seemed there to be. To this man the terror and the awe lay in the fact that God did seem there beside him night and day, the only Being in all that changeless solitude. God, and the dead man, and he seemed the only realities in a universe of shifting shadows.

One day he found a late-blossoming wild flower in the shadow of a tussock. He clutched at it like a child and hugged it to his bosom, tears springing to his eyes. He took it home with him, and had it by him while he slept. He could not love and admire too much this homely little thing that spoke of simplicity and common everyday life. He held it in his hand and fondled it, till the fragile flower drooped on its long, slender stem and died. Then again he was left alone with the majestic, unpitying stars, whose million eyes burnt into his soul. He remembered a fragment of the Psalms that he had once known: 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' What came after he had forgotten, but this he had no chance of forgetting whilst these relentless ministers of His glory shone luminous above him night by night.

Often at dusk the woodhens would steal out from tussock and toomatoogooroo, croaking shrilly. One, bolder than the rest, would come to his very door. He had been wont to hunt these birds unmercifully, but now he tried his utmost to propitiate and tame this one. He longed to stroke its speckled black-and-brown plumage, and have it eat out of his hand. Once it carried off a gaudy handkerchief he had spread out to attract it, and he rolled himself up in his blankets that night happy. But it never came again. Perhaps a chance stone or a dog had ended its life.

He had been almost afraid to ask for a newspaper when buying his stores, lest the very fact should betray him. Yet he had conquered his guilty tremors, bought one, and unfolded the crackling sheets in his hut, glancing his eyes fearfully over each

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column. No, there was nothing of—of his murder case! Perhaps the first sensation caused by it was over, or perhaps this little country chronicle was silent when larger papers were still full of it. Anyway, he told himself for the meantime he was safe—safe—safe! He tried to say the word jubilantly, but in spite of himself it had a melancholy ring.

The door of the hut had evidently been made of new timber, for as the sap had receded the planks had shrank apart from each other, leaving wide yawning gaps through which the daylight streamed and the wind blew. To remedy this state of affairs the dead man had pasted old newspapers partly across the back of the door. These the present occupier would read and re-read as he lay listlessly on the floor beside them. At least, they kept his reason from going. But one sheet contained an account of a murder, every word of which soon seemed branded into his brain, so well he knew every line, every turn of phrase in it. It ended abruptly, too, at the turn of the sheet on which it was printed. At the very climax of the tragedy all became suddenly blank. The unfinished horror of it haunted the man. To him it was made more awful by far by this ghastly break in it. He pondered it over and over, half unconsciously, many a dreamlike ending suggesting itself to him, always to be rejected on a later review of it. At last, in despair, and to save his mind from the utter horror of madness, he rose one morning and pasted another sheet over it, which contained only the trivial news of some local centre. The relief to his overwrought and sensitive mood was exquisite. It came upon him with a sudden burst of sweetness, like the scent of unguessed at violets.

One morning in February, for he had kept some rude count of the days, he awoke in the dusk of earliest dawn. He could not sleep again; a voice seemed whispering in his heart, and the place seemed insufferably hot. He hustled on his clothes, and went out to the door. It was very still. The rugged peaks looked softer in this light, and the undulating tussocks might have passed for waves of the sea. Slowly the gorgeous rose of day burst and flamed above the horizon, shooting its marvellous lights far and wide, till the sun himself leapt up, and the pomp of dawn was over. Jack stood watching, and still that voice seemed whispering in his heart. He had a strange idea of an angel with a fiery sword standing beside him. At last he could endure it no longer. All the slow agony of these weeks seemed concentrated into a moment, and with a rush his soul went down into the black

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waters of a bitterness worse than death. He dropped on his knees, and a cry of anguish broke from him. St. Peter's words seemed the only prayer he could use. He muttered hoarsely again and again, 'Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man!' Then the awful loneliness seemed to break, and in its stead came a feeling of warm human compassion and kindliness.

He took some breakfast, made his few scanty preparations, and set off for his old home. Harvesting had begun, and as he went he rejoiced in the cheery sounds of labour that met him, watched with eagerness the reaping machines that went on and on, leaving full sheaves behind them, and could have laughed with joy at the sound of men's voices. One or two loiterers eyed him curiously, making him conscious that he looked an odd figure, but he cared little; he went on almost as though he trod on air. He reached the village, and made straight for the police-station.

There was a new official there, a six-foot Irishman, with red whiskers, who looked up from his papers in wonder, as this thin, hollow-eyed man, with straggling grizzled hair, came in and greeted him. He was inclined from his looks to think him 'a shingle short.'

This belief was strengthened when his visitor, without any preamble, rushed into the statement of a murder committed by him some two months back. His account was clear enough, certainly; he gave facts, dates, and names without a shadow of hesitation, and yet the Irishman scratched his head in the manner of one sorely puzzled.

'Now see here, me boy,' he began at length, 'wan of us two must be mad, and, faith, I'm thinking that one's not me. You say it was Bill Harris fwhat you knocked on the head, afore ivir I came to the place. Now that may be; but, faith, it was Bill Harris and me were havin' a cup of thay togither no longer ago than the last night. So fwhat in the livin' wide world div ye mean by sayin' ye've killed him? Or ilse, fwhat, in the creation of cats, does he mane by comin' aloive agin? Tell me that, me son!'

Jack tottered to the one chair the office contained, and sank down in it, his breath coming hard and hoarse. He tried to speak, but his dry lips uttered no sound. The Irishman, being a good-hearted fellow, got him a glass of water, and held it to his lips while he drank.

'Now see here, me sonny,' he continued soothingly, 'I'll jist tell ye fwhat it all is. You and this man hev quarrelled, and ye've got dhrink—and infernal bad dhrink it is here, me son—

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righteous woman—hard and fast rules and sharp punishments. She inspires in the little girl the fear which is but too prone to protect itself by white lies. When Louise has been long a married woman, she is still in no small awe of her mother, nay, has, up to the time of Madame's death—though she is a tender daughter and a devoted—the shrinking of the weak nature before the strong.

Uncle Bellegarde seems to be particularly kind, and Aunt Bellegarde distinctly disagreeable. Louise forms devoted youthful friendships with her girl cousins, and writes affectionate careful letters (careful, remembering he is her dear tutor and won't expect faults of style and expression) to M. d'Affry. Then she goes for a little while to a convent. When she comes out of it she is no longer a child, but a charming girl, not pretty (but then a Frenchwoman does not need beauty to make her attractive), with great dark eyes in a very pale, thin, animated, and expressive face. As there is a boy cousin a good deal at home, Louise, of course, immediately falls in love with him. She confides her passion to his married sisters, who, to do them justice, warn her quite openly of their brother's real character—of his 'rare facility' for lying, his expensive, gay tastes, and notoriety for worse wickedness. Louise is not in the least disillusioned, of course. She has the most obstinate youthful infatuation. To be sure this delightful M. de la Live does not at all care for her at present. But he will—he must. M. de la Live—he presently changes his name to d'Épinay—is, in point of fact, not long proof against the very evident admiration of his charming little cousin, and having just, and most conveniently, been made *fermier général*, marries her at St. Roch. Louise is nineteen.

The young pair continue, after the French fashion, to live with M. de Bellegarde. Madame Bellegarde is now dead, so Madame d'Esclavelles has taken her place in the house. The d'Épinays begin their married life with that *abandon* to passion which goes before disenchantment more certainly than pride before a fall. On the very first day they have the most charming coquettish quarrel about rouge. Is Louise to put it on, like other women of her time, or not? Mama says, No. M. d'Épinay says, Yes. Between these two strong-minded people, Louise really can't tell in the least how to act. She gives the most vivacious little account of the scene herself. She is in the hey-day of a very brief delight—young, attractive, beloved. One can read between the lines the pleasure of her gay little heart, and

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can't but feel sad for the happiness that has no stamina to keep it alive.

The pair after a time, and not a little in opposition to the wishes of Madame d'Esclavelles, very naturally like to go out and enjoy themselves. M. d'Épinay seems to take possession of Louise's character, as Mama took possession of it in her childhood. She is just now, at least, more afraid of him than of her mother and, besides, *wants* to go to those balls and parties where her brightness and vivacity make her more admired than all the regular, dull beauty in Paris. So they ignore Mama's strictness and presently, and in the very greatest excitement, give a ball themselves.

They have been married about a year when Louise discovers, what the warnings of her sisters-in-law failed to make her realise, the true nature of the man she has married. It is difficult to fancy a more contemptible person than this gay, easy, pleasant, extravagant, self-indulgent, light-hearted *fermier général*. M. d'Épinay is never troubled all his life long by a scruple. He has not the faintest sense of responsibility. He is more cheerfully and good-naturedly wicked than any other Frenchman in history. He does not indeed plan to avoid right and practise wrong. He simply sees no difference between them.

As Louise is a very young wife and has been, poor soul, happy but such a very short time, the shrieks and faintings with which she first learns of her husband's faithlessness may be well forgiven her. M. Jully, her brother-in-law, comforts her by saying, 'What does it signify? He won't love you any less in his heart.' M. d'Épinay himself also thinks it really does not matter. Louise always ends by sharing the opinion of the people she is with. So she puts on a very pretty frock and a little colour on to her pale cheeks, feels quite bright again, and they all go to a delightful ball at the opera.

She has a better consolation when in the September of 1746 her little son is born to her. There is a great deal of natural affection in this not very profound little heart, it seems. Madame is delightfully fond and proud of the baby, and wants very much to keep him with her instead of putting him out to be nursed, after the unnatural fashion of the time. 'Que voilà une de ces folles idées!' writes M. d'Épinay, who is away making his duty 'tour en province.' So Louise yields, as she always yields. It is while Monsieur is on this tour and his wife is still calling him her 'angel,' and finding his absence 'insupportable,' that she

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discovers by chance one day at a Paris jeweller's that the 'angel' has been giving his portrait mounted in pearls to Some Other Person. When she taxes him with this faithlessness when he comes home, he laughs and stops her mouth with a kiss. 'What difference does it make to you?' he says (just as M. Jully has said). 'However fond I am of others, I shall always be fondest of you.' It is a fine consolation. There is not a little significance in the fact that as M. d'Épinay, gay, self-pleased and débonnaire, goes out of the room laughing, M. de Francueil, who is to play so fatal a part in the wife's life, enters it.

The whole scene is quite characteristic of that 'Age of Persiflage' which is even now rushing drunk with wit and pleasure, blinded by its own lightness, its specious talking and evil-doing, upon the naked swords of the Terror.

Louise, since that gay, faithless husband leaves her so much, begins in a sort of self-defence to form friendships on her own account. There is Madame d'Arty, who has no reputation to speak of, and who one night takes Louise (Louise wanting to go, and half afraid, and planning feeble little excuse for her naughtiness in her own mind all the time) to a gay surreptitious supper with the inspector of the opera. M. d'Épinay is dreadfully angry when he finds out about the adventure. It is not wicked. It is worse. It is *inconvenable.* Of what can Madame d'Arty be thinking? It is Monsieur himself who introduces his wife to the friendship of the notorious Mademoiselle d'Ette, who is so shameless, so clever, and so abandoned—with her exquisite complexion of milk and roses, and her girlish airs of timidity—that of all the base actions of the *fermier général's* life this introduction is perhaps the basest.

Mademoiselle takes possession of the little Madame immediately. She establishes herself *chez Épinay.* Monsieur is away. She sits at work with Louise—those endless tapestries and embroideries which are the fashion of the day—looks up from the frame, perhaps, with her beautiful false eyes, to see how much she may dare to say to this weaker woman, for how strong a poison the feeble soul is fit. Louise adores her and confides in her. (Louise goes on adoring and confiding in the latest comer nearly all her life.) Mademoiselle tells her own shameful history; adding complacently, as comment, 'In all that youth and lightness made me do there is nothing, thank God, for which I need blush.'

When M. de Francueil calls and bends over Louise's little

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hand, and brings to bear upon her very susceptible heart the charms of his cultivated intelligence and of his handsome face, the little devil of the embroidery frame (there is no other word that quite fits Mademoiselle d'Ette) sees the means to get Madame into her power, and uses them. The next day, perhaps, she tells Louise the further true story of M. d'Épinay's infidelities. The wife repudiates the insinuations; listens—doubts—believes. There seems no very specific reason why Mademoiselle should wish to ruin her friend. That Madame dares to be still innocent while Mademoiselle is corrupt to the core, may be reason enough.

In June, 1747, Louise has a little daughter. By the time she returns to Paris and her husband joins her again, the influence of the friend he has given her has sunk deep into her soul. She complains plaintively of the dreadful *ennui* of having to feign pleasure at the reunion, when she cannot feel it. Their marriage is stripped of the last rag of illusion. From henceforward all intimacy between husband and wife is at an end.

One can well imagine that Louise's frame of mind when she goes to her husband's place, La Chevrette, with her children, her father-in-law and his household, is not a little dangerous. She is young, deceived, susceptible. She is under the influence of a bad woman. She is deplorably weak. When M. de Bellegarde invites Francueil to stay there with them, it must seem like a decree of destiny. But then, as ever, 'character is destiny,' one must remember.

Francueil is one of the most brilliant figures of the eighteenth century. He is a musician and an actor of no mean order, and has the finest literary taste and judgment. He is receiver-general, has a large fortune, delightful manners, an agreeable person, and a complete incapacity for any kind of fidelity. He has at this time a wife in the background, but she does not seem to count, and is, in fact, dismissed, as it were, from consideration by a man who is once Francueil's secretary, and is to be the greatest man of his age, in the words *bien laide, bien douce.*

A very vivid imagination is not needed to picture the life at La Chevrette. Francueil teaches Madame composition and harmony. The bright pupil looks up into the tutor's handsome face and learns there what is not written in text-books. A woman can find, if she likes, a personal application in algebra or in Greek roots. One may be sure Louise is not long in discovering a very human side to the lessons of this brilliant preceptor. She tells him presently—with bewitching tears, no doubt—the history of

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her husband's falseness. It is hard to say whether she is more charming when she is softly gay or softly sad. The pair are soon vowing an eternal, 'pure,' and 'disinterested friendship.' They take long walks, when they discuss problems of the heart and soul—the heart and soul meaning of course those particular organs which belong to Madame d'Épinay and M. de Francueil. When they come home after these rambles, half guilty, half happy, there is Mademoiselle d'Ette with her evil smile, knowing everything, and working to the vile end quietly in the background, and M. de Bellegarde good-humoured and unconscious.

Everything is against them—the dangerous philosophies both have imbibed, the low public opinion of their age, base friends, bad examples, their own characters. Louise denies herself to the lover for a day or two, weeps, faints, and writes, 'Go, go; I will never forgive you'—and forgives. It is a very old, shameful story, with the same end always.

There is, perhaps, no worse testimony against Madame d'Épinay than the account she herself gives of this episode in her Memoirs. Her pretty self-complacency is just ruffled. It is as if she would say, 'A little imprudent, a little unwise, but *so* naïve, *so* impulsive, *so* warmhearted!' When M. de Francueil brings down a little troupe of actors to La Chevrette, the charming novelty dismisses from this light soul the last faint shadow of uneasiness which might remain to trouble its peace. Louise is quickly discovered to be the most *piquante* of amateur actresses, with, it is said, something in her voice, eyes, smile, that moves the heart. Madame de Maupeou, her sister-in-law, is also delightfully *piquante* in the part of a servant, Lisette—so *piquante*, in fact, that Monsieur de Maupeou forbids her to act any more. (The attitude of most of these wives towards their husbands is pretty well described by Francueil when he writes to Louise, 'C'est que votre mari est un monstre et vous une adorable créature.') The young people rehearse and coquet and amuse themselves very well indeed. M. de Bellegarde and Madame d'Esclavelles permit the frivolity in the hope that it may distract Louise from the melancholy thoughts of her husband's infidelity.

She *is* sufficiently distracted, it seems. The play is a comedy entitled *L'Engagement téméraire*; and one night Francueil presents to the troupe the author, one Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'as poor as Job and with wit and vanity enough for four.' Rousseau is at this time thirty-seven years old—coward, liar,

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sensualist, genius. It is only the genius which Madame d'Épinay and her friends regard. That covers all sins. The charming *comédiennes* flatter him, no doubt, to the top of his bent, and he answers them, after his kind, with brutality and insult, so that they must needs worship the more. Through his comedy runs all the time that other comedy of the loves of Francueil and Louise, and in the background, watching always, Mademoiselle d'Ette writes her view of the proceedings to her Chevalier Vallory.

Among the easy lies which steal into these Memoirs of Madame d'Épinay there are, most naturally, also many suppressions of fact. In 1750 is born her daughter Pauline, whom Madame, with but too good reasons, tries to confuse with the child born in 1747. But if it is the consequences of evil-doing which ruin reputation, it is the evil itself which ruins the soul. It seems to matter very little whether in such a case Madame speaks the truth or not. The sin is sinned.

It is in this same year that Louise is introduced to the society of Mademoiselle Quinault. The Quinault is a wit, entirely without a moral sense and with a taste for clever company and doubtful jokes. Francueil calls her 'la Ninon du siècle.' At her house, twice a week, meet a little party as clever as any in Paris. Here one night is M. Duclos, who is to be Secretary of the Academy and historiographer of France, and who is already the man who can, or at any rate does, say anything—trenchant, despotic, domineering. Here is the Marquis de Saint-Lambert—soldier, poet, philosopher, cultivated man of the world, and lover of that Madame d'Houdetot, Louise's sister-in-law, who is afterwards the original of Rousseau's 'Julie' in *Héloïse.* Louise herself brings to the party ('we were only five') youth, charm, sympathy; that engaging weakness which always makes her agree with the last speaker; and that accommodating conscience which is hurt by no vileness prettily expressed. The Quinault's little niece is sent away at the dessert. One wants to say everything that comes into one's head. The hostess is not going to have any restriction on her coarse pleasantries. When the conversation turns on the decency of going without clothes, Louise weakly thinks for a minute the subject a little unsuitable—'but then, M. de St. Lambert puts into it reflections so grave, so exalted!' The remark is inimitably characteristic of the woman. A little new poem by Voltaire is introduced presently—on whose merits the little gathering differs charmingly—and another evening, when

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Rousseau is of the company, they discuss atheism. They touch all subjects with a cleverness not a little seductive and extraordinary, and express their theories with such a brilliancy that there is no wonder that the theorists as well as their listeners are too dazzled to see the truth. It is only Rousseau (though he is a beast, he has something of the freedom and naturalness of a beast of the field) who brings into this world of shams and artifices that enthusiastic earnestness which characterises all his emotions while they last.

'As for me, sir,' says he, 'I believe in God.' And when St. Lambert speaks of such a faith as the 'origin of all the follies,' 'Messieurs,' says Rousseau, 'if you say another word I go.' And, later, 'I cannot bear this rage for destruction. . . . The idea of a God is necessary to happiness.'

Louise is on the side of faith, too. But 'we only believe as deep as we live' after all. She has a charming fit of repentance presently for her poor light little life; confesses all the 'chagrins que m'avait donné mon mari' to the Abbé Martin; for a few days wants dreadfully to be a Carmelite, and is a little deterred from the plan by the Abbé telling her that God is not to be made a *pis aller*, and a great deal deterred by the fact that the world (where, says M. Martin, lies her duty) is really more attractive after all.

By this time M. d'Épinay's extravagances have necessitated a *séparation de biens* between husband and wife. Madame now begins to receive her friends regularly twice a week for music, and to read or play comedies. Duclos comes to stay at La Chevrette, half falls in love with Louise, and gets her quite into his coarse power by making her tell him the story of her love for Francueil. Mademoiselle d'Ette, who is still *chez Épinay*, hates Duclos, and fights him, as it were, for the mastery over the little Madame. Louise is the shuttlecock between two players. If she were a good woman her weakness would ruin her past hope. As it is——

Francueil grows cold presently, which, with his temperament, might very well have been expected. Louise weeps over his coldness to Mademoiselle d'Ette, looks up through tears, and sees —or thinks she sees—that Mademoiselle herself has a passion for Francueil. Louise is soon writing (very likely not at all unjustly) of that dearest confidante and bosom friend: 'Who knows if she is not now my husband's spy? . . . I have so many reasons to suspect her.'

At a supper party at Madame Jully's, Francueil, who is intoxi-

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cated, drops a note Louise has given him in front of M. d'Épinay. The hostess, who has had on her own account a pretty little experience in intrigue, picks up the note and saves the situation. It is thought that M. d'Épinay has incited Francueil to drink in order that he may make admissions derogatory to Louise. It may be true, perhaps. In this society nothing is too vile to be possible. Madame's intimates are now Rousseau, Gauffecourt, Duclos, Madame de Jully, Chevalier Vallory, and Mademoiselle d'Ette. In that list there is no person clean, honourable, or virtuous. It is not until Rousseau introduces Grimm to the party (though even Grimm, Heaven knows, does not reach an over-exalted standard of moral perfection) that one feels one can breathe at all in that tainted air.

Grimm is at this time still a young man. He is the friend of Holbach and Diderot, as well as of Rousseau. He is of German extraction, with some of the solidity of the Teutonic character, combined with the taste and polish of the Frenchman. He is already an *habitué* of the salons of Madame Geoffrin and the Duke of Orleans. He is the favourite of Catharine of Russia, and has begun his 'Correspondance Littéraire.' In character he seems to be strong, melancholy, and reserved—the man who is, as it were, always superior to the situation, hard and excellent in counsel, fixed in idea, cool and wise in judgment, firm, clear-seeing, and ambitious.

Since Louise has now broken with her lover, as her lover, it is inevitable that she should fall under a new command.

It would seem to be in the nature of the noblest women, as the weakest, never to know rest or happiness until they have met their master. Only in the one case it is too hard to find him, and in the other too easy. One may be thankful that it is Grimm who now dominates this little Madame, instead of another d'Épinay or a Francueil.

She begins by asking him to her concerts. He has a passionate love of music, as well as that cultivated taste for art, science, and literature. One night he hears her name insulted, fights a duel for its honour (alas! poor soiled little name), is wounded, and has earned her gratitude for ever. Duclos, who tyrannises over her, hates Grimm, as may be imagined. Francueil, who still visits at La Chevrette, may be in his heart not too much his friend. 'But,' says Madame easily, 'we led a very charming life.' M. de Francueil came as often as M. Grimm. 'Ils se partageaient même de fort bon accord les soins qu'ils voulaient bien se donner pour l'instruction de mes

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enfants.' There is no sentence in history, perhaps, which reveals so total a depravity of all moral sense as this one. It is Grimm, but not Louise, who does at last object to the situation, and, having forced her to quarrel with Duclos, suggests that Francueil shall no longer be a guest at her house.

With her connection with Grimm (it lasts till her death) begins the least unworthy part of her life. If he loves her, he loves his career and ambition better. But he rules her. And on her side she has that wholesome fear of him which often keeps a fickle nature constant.

It is in 1756 that Madame d'Épinay offers Rousseau the famous 'Hermitage'—the little house situated near La Chevrette, on the borders of the forest of Montmorency, and belonging to M. d'Épinay. Rousseau responds to the offer after his manner: 'Do you want to make me a valet, a dependent, with your gift?' says he—and takes it.

Madame has now the satisfaction of seeing every day the greatest scoundrel and genius of the time. Here is the man at once mean and great, lower than the beasts in his instincts, and with aspirations reaching to the gods. Here he is, very vile, but not wholly vile; mixed in the basest intrigues, vain, mad, morbid, lying, treacherous, and yet with ideals not all ignoble, and a rugged earnestness not to be denied.

Madame's pleasure at being so nearly in touch with a celebrity can never be quite unalloyed. The celebrity is from the first consistently rude and ungrateful, always taking offence where no offence is meant, piqued, childish, ridiculous, and obstinately seeing the world *en noir*. To La Chevrette come constantly Desmahis, Saint-Lambert, Gauffecourt, Monsieur Jully. Louise, gaily playful, calls them 'mes ours;' and Grimm her 'Tyran Le Blanc.' 'Tyran Le Blanc' is called away presently by his duties; and Louise, on some ill-fated day, introduces that charming sister-in-law of hers, Madame d'Houdetot, at the Hermitage.

Hitherto the relationship between the Hermit and Madame d'Épinay has been a kind of coquettish friendship. If Rousseau is a little bit in love with Madame (and he always falls in love —save the mark!—with any woman with whom he is brought much in contact), Louise, for all her 'Tyran Le Blanc,' is not the woman to object to the admiration. It seems pretty certain that she feels a little betrayed when Jean-Jacques finds in the sister-in-law the Julie of his *Nouvelle Héloïse* in the flesh, and worships

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at the shrine of a woman who is neither modish nor beautiful, and is already provided (though, to be sure, that does not count much in these times) with both husband and lover. Louise is thrown back upon herself. There is a coldness. Then she sends Rousseau some flannel for a waistcoat—to restore warmth one may suppose. There is a deeper coldness. Then an angry flame about a letter. If there is anything duller than details of old intrigues it is the details of old quarrels. It may be safely assumed that Rousseau is in the wrong (he has a talent for being in that position), and that Louise is inconsequent and imprudent as usual. One may well pity her. Her Tyrant has joined the army at the bidding of the Duke of Orleans. She writes to him that when he is with her he inspires her with that feeling of security which a child has resting on its mother's breast. There are a thousand dangers and difficulties about her loneliness. Her father-in-law, who cared for her, is dead. She has certainly no wisdom or judgment of her own to rely on. She impetuously confides in everybody, as she has always done, and her confidences are very naturally betrayed. She is supposed to inform the Marquis de Saint-Lambert of Rousseau's passion for his mistress. Perhaps she really does; she denies the insinuation so warmly. Everybody seems to get mixed up in the quarrel, and all act after their own natures, which are bad. Its first vehemence dies out a little. But Rousseau, who still keeps her gift—the Hermitage—defames the giver with a matchless foulness in his *Confessions*. From that effect of her folly, even Grimm (who from his letters would seem to be the only person who brings any reason and common sense into the dispute) cannot save her. All the time Madame has been writing him plaintive little lying letters (giving her own convenient, plausible views of the situation and her conduct), which deceive herself, but not her lover or the world.

In 1757 she goes to Geneva, partly on account of money troubles and partly to consult the famous Dr. Tronchin. She leaves Grimm behind her, at war with Rousseau, and revising the first volumes of the famous Encyclopædia with Diderot. With her go her son and Linant, his tutor. (Louise is always a good mother according to her lights, and aptly described as one of those women 'who write moral treatises on education in the brief leisure left them by their lovers.') She establishes herself then at Geneva under Tronchin, and lives there a life very modest and simple. She has her mornings to herself, dines *en famille*, and after dinner receives till seven or eight. She walks a good deal

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in the public gardens. She has always been fond of walking, and Tronchin, who is greatly in advance of his age in his views upon health, recommends the exercise to his lazy and ladylike patients. The little society of Geneva is very pleasant and honest, Madame finds. One plays cards, does needlework, has a little music, takes tea after the English fashion, and visits one's friends in the afternoons. Isn't this better than La Chevrette and Mademoiselle d'Ette (Madame has completely broken with the d'Ette by now), and the uneasy years of intrigue and passion that made up her youth?

When Grimm comes to Geneva for an eight months' stay, during which he and Louise work together at the 'Correspondance Littéraire,' she is perhaps as happy as she has ever been in her life. She presently makes the acquaintance of Voltaire, who calls her his Beautiful Philosopher, and plays with her (all men regard Louise as a clever little toy, it seems) when she becomes a constant visitor at Les Délices, while she on her side speaks of that 'withered Pontiff of Encyclopædism' as more amiable, more gay, and more extravagant than at fifteen.

When she returns to Paris after an absence of two years Rousseau has left the Hermitage. Grimm has been nominated envoy to Frankfort, and she finds a resource from boredom and solitude in the friendship of Diderot and the Salon of Baron Holbach, and that 'Correspondance Littéraire' which is Grimm's true title to glory, and which has as its aim to render foreign princes an account of the art, science, literature, wit, and mental progress of Paris.

Madame d'Épinay is now past youth. Her mother is dead. Her daughter, Pauline, is married. M. d'Épinay, of whom Diderot says that he ran through two millions of money without saying a kind word or doing a good action to anybody, is completely bankrupt. Madame takes a very small house, establishes her Salon, and reconquers that world which, through bad health, damaged reputation, and long absence, she has lost. She is now perhaps both morally and mentally at her best. The quick temptations of youth have left her. And this is the woman, alas! who is only good when there is no incitement to be bad. It must be said of her that she has shown not a little pluck and spirit in the face of poverty and difficulties. Her fickleness has Grimm's strength to support it. Her sympathy with literature makes an honest interest for her. If she is still something of the gay little liar, bright, volatile, intriguing, who began the world as Louise

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d'Esclavelles, that is because life, though it develops character, seldom alters it.

The Salon of Madame d'Épinay has that characteristic common to nearly all the Salons—its presiding genius is neither young, beautiful, wealthy, nor even well educated.

A woman, in fact, always influences not by how much she knows, but by how much she feels. In the gatherings of this little Louise, at any rate, the gravest subjects are discussed and threshed out. After the *ivresse* and folly of the Regency, gravity has suddenly become the mode. The most frivolous women are profoundly absorbed in political economy and philanthropy. Philosophic ideas are daily gaining ground. To-day one is evolving a new religion—some fine religion of Humanity, which works out beautifully in talk or on paper, and in practice leads to Candeille, Goddess of Reason. To this Salon comes almost the whole diplomatic corps. Baron Gleichen, Lord Stormont (the Ambassador of Great Britain), Caraccioli, Diderot, Galiani, and the ill-fated Marquis de Mora, are here almost every night. Louise listens equally charmingly to them all. Is she a humbug? Hardly. She has only that most dangerous gift—the power of seeing things exactly as the last speaker sees them. When this man is talking philosophy to her she is an impassioned philosopher. With a theologian she has a *culte* for religions. To be sympathetic it is not necessary to *know* much of a man's work and aims, but essential to catch his enthusiasm for them, to respond to fervour with fervour, and to realise that what one's dearest hope is to oneself this man's career or philosophy or ambition is to him.

If even Madame d'Épinay has this gift in a less degree than some of her rival Salonières, that she has it in a very marked degree is not to be doubted.

In the early days of 1775 appear in print her 'Conversations d'Émilie,' which are in fact literal reproductions of conversations she has had with a certain dear little grand-daughter, her daughter's child. The book, though it is really a book of education, is only another proof that nature and naturalness are always delightful. Little Émilie's replies have the innocent *naïveté* of childhood and all the freshness of truth. Madame d'Épinay's talent as a writer is indeed like the literary talent of nearly all women, and lies in this work, as in her 'Memoirs,' in reproduction and observation, and not in invention. 'Émilie' is smiled on by Voltaire in his old age at Ferney, and by that cleverest of women,

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the Empress Catharine of Russia. Diderot, Grimm, Gleichen, and Galiani praise its gaiety and originality, and in 1778 it goes, to everyone's satisfaction, into a new edition.

Before this time Madame d'Épinay's health, never robust, has begun to cause her friends great anxiety. She would seem, like many delicate people, to bear and to have always borne her physical sufferings very pluckily. The little Émilie is with her a great deal. Grimm, never impassioned, is yet always faithful. He has an extraordinary attachment for the grandchild, which perhaps brings him the more often to see Louise. In 1777 she hears of Francueil's marriage to a daughter of Marshal Saxe. (Of this marriage is born a son, Maurice Dupin, who is the father of Madame George Sand.) In 1778 Louise sees in Paris Voltaire, now near his death. Rousseau (whose 'Confessions' have had so fatal an effect upon her good name) does not long survive him. It is Madame's part, though she is herself not an old woman, to watch the going of almost all the acquaintances of her youth. Her situation is very lonely. Her husband's death does not make it any lonelier perhaps. Her son is wild—after such an upbringing and amid such examples how should he not be? Her daughter has her own life to lead. What must be the feelings of the woman with death in the near future and that wasted existence to look back at in the past?

Is it repentance, agony, remorse, terror, that she suffers in those lonely hours of sickness and solitude? It would not seem to be so. After all 'one can be but what one is.'

The dying woman faces the great mystery with at least something of that *légèreté* with which the coquette of La Chevrette faced life. A sinner? Well, perhaps. But not half such a great sinner as most of one's acquaintance! If one lives self-deceived, one may well die so.

Madame is removed presently to a little house at Chaillot, and there from her sick bed composes and sends to Grimm, with a lock of her hair, the verses which begin:

> Les voilà, ces cheveux que le temps a blanchis:
> D'une longue union ils sont pour nous le gage.

She has friends and relatives about her to the end. Her last correspondence is with that chief of all the Encyclopædists, d'Alembert. And then her 'Conversations' attain the supreme honour of being crowned by the *Académie Française*. So that she dies smiling as she has lived.

. . . . . .

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Her 'Memoirs,' which are chiefly known to English people through Sydney Smith's brilliant critique, owe their great claim to fame in the vivid pictures they give of Rousseau, Duclos, Voltaire, and many minor celebrities. They are written in a style very bright, easy and vivacious. They record not a few inimitable conversations (as in the two scenes at Mademoiselle Quinault's), and here and there a memorable axiom. They present strikingly the life and manners of the day. Further than this they are worth little.

These are the 'Memoirs' of false names and suppressions. Madame invents a tutor to tell the story of the charming Émilie, and only tells the truth about her because she does not perceive how damning that truth is. When, indeed, the conduct of this heroine has been too obviously shameless even for her to think it virtuous, she appeals very prettily from the reader's judgment and moral sense to that much more gullible thing, his feelings. The whole book is full of very brightly written details of very dull intrigues; of sordid details of bankruptcy and creditors; of minute details of old quarrels; of loathsome details of sickness and sin. If one wants to keep intact a faith in noble aims, in self-devotion, and in that spirit which has made some put honour first and pleasure a great way after, one will not read Madame d'Épinay. But if one is a pessimist about human nature and wants his pessimism confirmed, he can hardly do better than study this lively account of the littleness and meanness of great men and of a great age; while the historian will certainly find a niche in the temple of fame for the woman who depicts so vividly, because so unconsciously, the crying need in her class and time of that cleansing by fire, the French Revolution.

S. G. TALLENTYRE.

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In the Name of a Woman.

By Arthur W. Marchmont,

Author of 'By Right of Sword,' 'A Dash for a Throne,' &c.

CHAPTER IX.

'I HAVE UNBOUNDED FAITH IN YOU.'

ALL my impressions of the interview with the Prince were quickly overshadowed by the one overpowering fear that the Princess was in imminent personal danger from the fury of the Countess Bokara. The Princess was regarded by her as the central pivot on which the whole Russian intrigue turned, and to take her life was the openly avowed object of that dangerous woman's passion.

That any attempt would be subtly planned and fearlessly carried out I knew well enough, and it was for the perfecting of such a scheme that she sought my help. This was indeed the crowning irony of the situation. I, who would give my life to save the Princess's, was to be this reckless fury's accomplice in a plot to murder her, in order to keep on the throne a Prince who had solemnly declared to me his unalterable decision to resign it.

Yet there was one ray of consolation. It was probable that I should be able to hold her scheme in check long enough to secure the safety of her intended victim, and I could at once urge upon the latter the necessity for the greatest caution. It was with this thought in my mind that I made my visit to the Princess in the afternoon.

Her house was a large one standing by itself in the centre of the town, and I scanned it curiously. I noticed with satisfaction that great precautions had been taken. All the windows in the lower part were barred heavily; and the defences might have

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been planned with the express view of preventing just such an attempt as was in contemplation. The Russians had obviously done the work, knowing the need for guarding jealously the woman on whom so much depended.

On that score I had no apprehensions, therefore, and I resolved to question the Princess closely as to the state of affairs within, and whether she was absolutely sure of those who formed her household.

She received me very graciously.

'Your interview with the Prince has made you thoughtful, Count,' she said, after a few minutes. 'Was my forecast right? and what have you done?'

'I have accepted the commission in his regiment, but I have not pledged myself to support his cause—indeed, he said that I should probably find myself bound in the end to commit myself to the Russian party.'

'It is singular that a man who showed himself so brave, and at first so capable, should be unable to read what is as plain as a book to other people.'

'His reading is that the one possible future for the country is for it to pass into the power of Russia.'

'I know that. It is his besetting weakness.' She said this very thoughtfully, and then her face and eyes lighted as she added with vehemence: 'And it is wrong—utterly and wholly wrong. The merest counsel of despair. By the help of Heaven we will live to prove it so; and if I have not counted on you in vain, you shall help us in the glorious work.'

She turned her eyes upon me with a look that infected me with her enthusiasm. 'You will help us, will you not?'

'With everything I possess, even to my life.'

'I know it; I am sure of you. Would to heaven we had more men like you with us! I am going to trust you—put perhaps our lives in your keeping, for I know well enough the dangers of the work. But I trust you—absolutely.' She held out her hand as she said this with an air and tone of implicit confidence, and I carried her fingers to my lips.

'Show me how to help,' I said, my voice unsteady with emotion.

'Openly we are all allied to the Russians in a scheme which is to make me the reigning Princess, independent of all Russian influence. This is the veil which hides their real intentions. Secretly there is an engagement that I shall become the wife of

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the Duke Sergius, admitting him to a half share of the throne, and thus Russianising it completely. To make sure of me, it is arranged that we be married secretly, the union only to be announced after my accession. The object for this is of course to bind me irrevocably to them beforehand; and it is expected that while I am seemingly independent, all that is national and patriotic in Bulgaria will be rallied to my support. We should thus get a firm hold of the throne and of all classes of the people without the suspicion of too great Russian predominance. Do you see that?'

I did; and my looks showed that I did not relish it.

'It is a shrewd scheme, no doubt,' I said.

She gazed at me steadily, almost reproachfully, I thought. But I did not like the scheme, and would not pretend that I did.

'Is it a plan you will help?' she asked. I was silent and cast my eyes on the ground.

'Is it a plan you will help?' she repeated.

'You place me in a position of great difficulty, Princess,' I replied, slowly.

'Will you help me in it?' she repeated.

'With such powerful influence behind you, you will not need my help that I can see,' I returned, ungraciously, for the scowling brutal face of Duke Sergius was in my thoughts.

Her eyes were still bent steadily upon me, and a side glance showed me their expression had changed.

'You are not frank with me, Count Benderoff,' she said, after a pause; and at that I looked up and said bluntly:

'If I offend you I am sorry; but I will not stir a finger to help the man you mean—the Duke Sergius.'

Her face was breaking into a smile, when she checked it, and I saw a faint wave of colour rise to her cheek.

'What do you know of Duke Sergius?' she asked. Again a pause.

'Little or nothing, Madame; but I will not serve in any cause where his interests are to be advanced.'

'Why do you not like him? You knew I was betrothed to him?'

She seemed suddenly bent on rousing my temper against the man.

'I had heard of it.'

'Yet, knowing it, you have not hitherto refused to help me?' Was she playing on my passion, that she persisted in her question-

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ing? 'You must have some reasons,' she continued, when I remained silent; 'what are they?' and to my astonishment the smile which she had before checked now passed beyond control and lighted her face rarely.

'You must not press me for my reasons,' I said quickly; and the light in her eyes may have reflected the thought behind it, for again the colour mantled her cheeks.

'Then you will not help me?' she said in a low voice that witched me.

'You? With my life!'

The passion in my tone made her cast down her eyes, till, with a still deeper colour on her face, she lifted them and said gently:

'Forgive me; I was but testing you. And if you blame me, think what store I may set upon an assurance of fidelity that is purely personal to me. Call it caprice if you will, a mere woman's caprice, that I should thus seek to probe your real thoughts and resolves.'

'There was no need to test me where you were concerned,' I replied; and again the earnestness of my tone appeared to embarrass her. In the short silence that followed I sat with but the loosest rein upon the hopes and thoughts that were so much to me.

'No; the Duke Sergius does not come into the scheme as we plan it,' she said; 'and I thought indeed that what Mademoiselle Broumoff told you would have made you understand this. I would do much for this country; and if it were necessary that I should marry him—which, thank God, it is not—I might force myself to go even to that extreme. But in my life there can be no thought of marriage. I should be baser than the base if, having taken this charge upon me, I should ever turn from it by any thought of myself.'

She spoke in a tone of lofty exaltation, a strange contrast indeed to what she had termed her 'mere woman's caprice;' and I held my peace.

'Our plan is this,' she resumed: 'to use the Russian ladder, and then kick it over. To make them pledge themselves before Europe to support me on the throne, and then to use the power of the throne for rallying the Bulgarians to defend themselves and their country against their real enemies.'

'You have mapped out a dangerous counterplot, Princess; but I like it, and if I can help, I will. How will you prevent the secret marriage?'

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'We shall have to leave that to be disposed of when the time comes. As you were warned, he is a man whose eyes we have ever to blind.'

'Are you sure of the people about you?'

'Of some—indeed, of many; but it is in that you can be of such help to us. I have heard of the suggestion you made so guardedly, that your house shall be the rendezvous of the movement to which those shall be brought who are known to be true to the country, and can be trusted. Such a meeting-place will be invaluable, especially where, as in your case, there is a plausible excuse for any such gatherings.'

'You mean?'

'We propose to form a kind of gymnasium club—at least, propose that you should form it among the young men of the city whom we can ascertain to be faithful. Of these men you will necessarily become the leader; so you see you will have an important part to play, my friend.'

'It is shrewd,' I said, perceiving at once its many possibilities, as I recalled Zoiloff's words. 'But how far are your plans advanced? Time presses.'

'Much farther advanced than you think. We have been working all the time this Russian scheme has been in progress, so that we should be ready when that reaches its climax. But matters will move faster now, and in a few weeks all should be prepared. It is a strong point that the very craft of General Kolfort itself has helped us. We have, as it were, a free hand for making our preparations. He is as anxious as we are that those Bulgarians who are opposed to the Prince, and would help me, but fear Russia, should be secured to us; and this has given us just the cover for our work that we needed. We shall triumph, Count, for the cause of truth is ours, and Bulgaria shall be free;' and her voice rang with earnestness.

I sat silent in thought for some moments.

'You have thought of the dangers to yourself?'

'I can but die, and where could one find a nobler end?' Her face shone with the light of willing martyrdom.

'You think the General has no suspicion?'

'He cannot have as yet. There will come a moment when his eyes will be opened, no doubt, and then the danger may be real enough. But I am prepared to face anything for the cause.'

I thought of that moment, and my heart feared for her; but

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I knew of the other danger from that wild woman, the Countess Bokara; and I must put her on her guard.

'It is not of the dangers we must think, Count, but of the great end to be achieved,' she added. 'To dwell on nothing but risks may make cowards of the bravest.'

'True; but we must at all events give enough heed to the dangers to be able to guard against them. Have you thought of the steps the Prince and those about him might take against you?'

'You may have influence with her,' she answered, understanding me readily. 'And I have had a half hope that you may be able to make her understand how hopeless are her efforts. Can you do this?'

'I am not hopeful. She is a woman of wild and vehement passions.'

'She is mad; she hates me so violently that if she dared she would herself plunge a knife into my heart. She clings to the shadow of power which she wields through the Prince with all the tenacity of ambition venomed by malice. I know it, but I do not fear her,' she said proudly. 'She is the greatest enemy this country has, even in this hour when its enemies throng every street, and are found in every house. Daring, unscrupulous, reckless, and saturated with the lust of power, she would use the Prince for the pursuit of her own ends, and those only, however cleverly masked by a boasted love of the country.'

The Princess was a very woman after all, I saw, for it was easy to read the personal dislike which breathed through her indignation.

'She may be very dangerous, Princess,' I said warningly.

She turned swiftly and looked at me, reading in my voice my genuine alarm for her. After a moment, her face softened into a smile, and she put her hand on my arm.

'You are warning me, I see, against something you know but cannot tell me. I will not ask you. I will do more, for your sake, and to relieve your fears on my account. I will be very cautious. You have a most difficult part to fulfil at present; I understand that. But I will guard against any such risks as you appear to contemplate. Your ready zeal for the cause is very welcome to me, Count—more welcome, perhaps, than I have been able to show you. For the sake of what you say, I will be very cautious.'

Her eyes rested a moment on my face, holding me in a thraldom of silent admiration. Then she added sweetly: 'But you must

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not let your fears for me print themselves so legibly on your face. We shall go forward together in this matter to victory, my friend. That is the thought to carry with you. Heaven will not suffer us to fail, let the risks and difficulties be what they may. We are close comrades now; and I feel that you have been sent just at the moment when such a man was absolutely necessary. And when we have gained the victory, you will play a large part in the far greater work that lies ahead. I have unbounded faith in you.'

'I do not need the spur of ambition to serve you, Princess; but, by the help of heaven, your faith in me shall never prove unfounded.' I spoke with intense earnestness, and then rose to leave. She rose, too, and gave me her hand, which I again carried to my lips; and it pleased me to think that her fingers trembled as my lips touched them.

I had reached the door when she said suddenly:

'Oh, there is one thing which I have not mentioned. We have a kind of watchword which you should know. Our friends are banded together "In the Name of a Woman," Count.'

I started with a touch of alarm.

'But General Kolfort knows of that. It was with that formula I was accosted by the messenger who led me to his house.'

'He chose it,' she answered, with a smile of reassurance. 'It is intended to mark off those who are for me as distinguished from those solely devoted to Russia, the good men and true for whom he thinks I can best act as his decoy.' I understood her. 'You will not forget it and all that it means, as I have explained to you to-day.'

'I am not likely to forget all that it means to me,' I said, and a quick glow on her face made me think she understood me, too, and was not displeased. With a little flush of pleasure I turned again to leave, when the door was opened, and a servant announced the Duke Sergius.

He came in hurriedly, with a look of vexation on his coarse, broad face, which deepened instantly to anger as his eyes fell upon me.

'They told me you were engaged, Princess, as I see,' he said, with a sneer at me; 'but I had a matter of urgency to discuss with you, so I bade your servants announce me.'

'Your urgency will cost my servants their places,' she answered, the expression of her face hardening into cold austerity—so different from anything I had seen during our interview.

'I did not think it could be anything very important,' he

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answered, paying no heed to her words. 'Who is this gentleman?' and he turned and glowered at me.

Not only a bully, but a cad, was my thought, as I returned his look with generous interest.

The Princess murmured our names formally and coldly.

'I have heard something of you, Count, from General Kolfort.' He spoke as if it had been nothing to my good. 'If I mistake not, I saw you at the ball last night.'

'I was there,' I answered curtly.

'I want a word or two with you, some time, and will wait upon you.' Had I been a servant at whom he was flinging an order, he could not have put more offensive patronage into his tone.

'If you will write your business I will see if I have time to give you an appointment,' I answered with intentional brusqueness. He was not accustomed to be addressed in such a tone, and he started and flushed with anger. I took no notice, but with a bow to the Princess I murmured, 'I have the honour to wish you good day, Madame,' and, ignoring the Duke entirely, I went away, leaving him staring angrily after me.

'I hate the brute,' I said to myself as I went into the street; and in truth I seemed to find a special cause of offence in the fact that I had had to leave him alone with the Princess. 'I wish to Heaven he'd quarrel with me,' I muttered; and, indeed, the wish was to have a fulfilment that at the moment I had no cause to anticipate or hope.

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CHAPTER X.

'IN THE NAME OF A WOMAN.'

THE result of my interview with the Princess will be readily understood. It made me more devoted to her than ever. The sweetness of her manner, the charm of her rare beauty, the loftiness of her aims, the faith and confidence she had shown in me, and the many signs of her reliance upon me had enslaved me. In a word, I was in love with her. She was far above me, and there was no hope that I could ever win her for my wife. There were a thousand obstacles in the way. But there was nothing to stop my loving her.

So far I had never met one to touch my heart and kindle the myriad flames of inspiring passion which throbbed and thrilled in

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me now with such ecstasy at the mere thought of this rare and wonderful pearl among women.

I gave heed to no thought of consequences—never paused to think what the end of such a passion might be, nor where it might lead me. She had changed every habit of my mind. Usually cautious, calculating, and self-reserved, I heeded nothing now but the delicious knowledge that I loved her and could serve her, and help her to gain the high and noble end she had in view. And serve her I vowed I would with every faculty I possessed, and, if the need were, at the cost of every drop of blood in my body. I flung every other consideration to the winds and dizzied my brain with dreams of the delight it would yield me to feel that I could be the means of helping her.

That she depended upon me and trusted me was in itself a delirium of pleasure, and, come what might, I would never fail nor falter in her service. Others might have their aims and objects in this wild business of the intrigue, I would serve Christina, and Christina only, 'In the Name of a Woman.' Whatever it should be to others, to me it had a real and inspiring meaning, and for me it was destined to be no mere watchword or formula, but the guiding principle of every act and thought, and the lode star to determine my life.

But I would guard my secret jealously; it should be mine and mine only. The fire must burn, but it should be down in the centre of my heart; and on the surface no prying eyes should pierce the mask of reserve with which I would conceal my passion.

All this came to me clearly in the frank self-communing of the night, and with it a full admission of the real cause for my hatred of the Duke Sergius. It was not so much the man himself I detested—detestable though I believed him—but the future husband of Christina, using and defiling that fair shrine for the sordid purpose of his selfish policy. He and those in league with him would use the rarest and fairest of God's women as a tool for their own base ends. The mere thought of it was an abomination of desecration.

But they would have to reckon with me, and in my new love-madness I piled up oath upon oath that I would spoil their plans and thwart their designs against her.

'I have unbounded faith in you.' The words rang in my ears like the strain from some angel's song, and filled me with such enthusiasm that I longed for the moment of action, and could

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scarce find patience to wait through the lingering hours of darkness that I might begin my work; and I lay, my brain simmering with plots and plans against the two men, Sergius and Kolfort, who were thus leagued against Christina.

By the morning, however, I was cooler, and in a fitter frame of mind to face the thousand difficulties of the position.

Spernow was with me early, and I had my first lesson in the necessity of keeping my feelings out of sight. He had heard of my interview with the Princess, and came eager to learn the result. I knew very well by this time that that very shrewd little Mademoiselle Broumoff was at the bottom of his eagerness, and I was on my guard.

I told him that the Princess had convinced me of the soundness of her policy, and that I should do all in my power to help her.

'Is she not all I said of her?' he asked.

'She is a woman with a mission,' I answered somewhat coldly. 'But her mission is a high and bright one in the interests of Bulgaria and freedom, and, as those are interests in which I feel a deep concern, I shall give her all the help in my power.'

The studied deliberateness of my tone perplexed him, for he looked at me in some surprise and disappointment.

'Is that all you thought of her, my dear Count? You must have a cool head—for you have filled her with enthusiasm.'

This was sweet music to me indeed; but I replied indifferently:

'I base my opinions on my judgment;' and I smiled as if in deprecation of enthusiasm. 'But now I have much to do to-day. I take possession of my house, and I wish to have a consultation with you and Captain Zoiloff as to certain plans. Will you bring him to me there at noon? We have to discuss the future form of our new association.'

As soon as he had left me I hurried to meet the officers of my regiment, and my reception by them was exceedingly cordial and friendly—partly due, as I afterwards learnt, to my duel with Ristich, who had been a much-hated man; and also because of my reputation as a man of wealth. I gave one prompt proof of this by asking the whole of my brother-officers to dine with me at an early date.

By noon I was back at my house to meet Zoiloff and Spernow, and after we had had some practice with the foils and in pistol shooting we set to work upon the serious business of the conference.

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We arranged that I should be the head of the organisation, with Zoiloff next in charge under me; and he threw himself with keen ardour into the work.

'I cannot tell you how glad I am to have you with us in this, Count,' he said, when we had debated and settled details. 'Now that you have come, you seem to be just the man we were waiting for; and this place of yours will be a magnificent rendezvous.'

'Shall we have many join us?'

'We do not want too many, but all will be carefully picked, and every man will be one wielding influence over others.'

'How will General Kolfort view the scheme?'

'All he will know will be that here is in training a band of young men all working for the object which he desires, and all capable of giving the greatest help to the movement. The real secret will be in as few hands as possible. When he knows more it will be too late for him to interfere,' he said with a smile.

'That will be the hour of danger,' I returned.

'Rather the hour of triumph. Think what it must mean in a country like ours to have, say, five hundred young men in this city, each influencing many more, drawn from all classes, high and low, all joined by the strongest ties for one common object, and all looking upon one man as their leader—"In the Name of a Woman." You will wield a tremendous power, Count. God grant you use it wisely,' he said, earnestly. 'But I have no doubt of that. I should not be here if I had.'

'I shall wield it only for the one object.'

'It will turn the scale in any crisis,' said Spernow.

'It will free the country,' said Zoiloff.

I said nothing, but was thinking of the help it would render to my Princess.

One thing troubled me. The General had declared that he would not permit me to remain in the country unless I pledged myself to join him; and give that pledge I would not. Neither would I leave the country. And when my two companions had left, I sat pondering a way out of the difficulty. There was but one way that I could see—to have him satisfied by some indirect means that I had espoused the cause of the Princess, and leave him to draw the inference for himself that in serving her I intended to serve him and his party also.

In this connection I thought of Spernow. He was the General's agent specially told off to sound me, and it would be quite possible for him to give a report sufficiently plausible to effect what was

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wanted. But who should coach Spernow? The answer came with the question. Without doubt it must be Mademoiselle Broumoff, and it remained only for me to get an interview with her and tell her what to do.

Inwardly I tried to persuade myself that this might be a sufficient reason for me to seek another interview with the Princess; but I put the temptation away from me, strong as it was, reflecting that any too great eagerness on my part to see her would only defeat the very end I had in view—to be of real help. I must raise no suspicions anywhere by seeking to see her too often.

I was thinking this matter out when a servant brought me the card of the Duke Sergius. I started as I saw it, and for a moment was inclined to send an excuse. But reflecting that I must now take my share in helping to blind his eyes, I went to him.

'I have not adopted the somewhat roundabout way you suggested yesterday for having an interview with you, Count Benderoff, but have come direct to you. I am accustomed to go straight to a point.'

'Yes?' My tone was curt.

'You and I must understand one another a little better. I have heard of you from General Kolfort, who seems inclined to take you rather seriously; and I may say at once that since I saw you yesterday I have changed my opinion about you. The Princess Christina spoke to me pretty frankly concerning you.'

'Yes?' I said again; I hated to hear him even speak her name so glibly.

'I looked on you before as a sort of superior spy—sent here, probably from England, to see what was going on. But I now understand that we are to be friends to work together. I am glad to hear it.' He spoke with a sort of blustering bluntness that he may have intended for an engaging frankness.

'I do not know that I am much concerned what opinion you take the trouble to form about me,' I answered, coldly.

'Hang it all, man, can't you see I have come in a friendly spirit to talk over together the things we have in common? Why do you receive me like this?' He spoke sharply, and, I thought, angrily; and when I did not answer immediately, he added with a laugh that had no mirth in it: 'You don't suppose I am in the habit of hawking round my friendship?'

'Have I suggested anything of the kind?'

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'You make it very difficult for me to enter into things with you.'

'I have seen you twice, sir,' I answered deliberately. 'The first time at the ball the other evening, when you were good enough to scowl at me, and yesterday at the Princess Christina's house, when your words were a kind of scowl expressed audibly. We Englishmen are not accustomed to read such actions as the preliminaries of a friendship.'

He started at the word Englishmen, and his eyes lighted with swift anger. Obviously he hated everything English; nor did I wish him to make an exception in my case. I think he read as much in my eyes.

'You Englishmen take very queer views of many things,' he answered, after a short pause. 'But I thought you were more a Roumanian, and thus a friend of my country?'

'I have the honour to be a Roumanian count,' I said, tersely.

'Do you wish to quarrel with me, Count Benderoff?' But before I could reply, he added: 'But there, that must be ridiculous, for the Princess tells me I may look upon you as a man devoted to her cause, and, therefore, to mine. I shall not be unmindful of those who help us, I would have you understand that—though I wish you did not make it so difficult for me to tell it you.'

'I am not working for any hope of material reward at your hands,' I answered equivocally. His patronising tone galled me.

'No matter. That will not prevent your accepting it when the time comes. Few men do that, I find—even Englishmen. But now I wish us to be friends and comrades, Count. Do you see any reason against it?'

'We have not begun auspiciously,' said I dryly.

'Hang it!' he cried with an oath. 'You are as diffident as a girl in her teens. I don't find men inclined to quarrel with my offers of friendship, I can tell you. I am not without power and influence, I can assure you;' and he smiled boastfully.

I made no response to his offer. I could not.

'You have made a good choice of a house, Count,' he said, after another pause. 'I congratulate you. And where is the room where you are going to lure the coy pigeons to be trained in the service of the Princess Christina?' Evidently she had told him of the project.

'I will show it you, if you like,' I said, rising.

'Nothing will please me better,' he said, following me from the room. 'Egad, a splendid hall!' he exclaimed in genuine

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admiration as we entered it. 'Men tell me, too, that you know how to use the sword well. From all accounts you easily spitted that fool Ristich the first time at old Kolfort's, and did just what you liked with him when you met him on the ground.'

'He was wounded, and in my opinion unfit to fight. I protested against his doing so, as you may have heard; but he insisted, and left me no option.'

He examined all the arrangements and gymnastic apparatus with obvious interest, making many comments to show his appreciation of everything.

'This is a novel thing for Sofia,' he said, after a while. 'And a devilish shrewd device to draw in the young bloods of the place. They will make a hero of you, Count. A splendid thought, and one that shows what an acquisition you will be to us. A pistol range, too; magnificent! May I try a shot or two?' He spoke with assumed indifference, but I caught a glance which told me he wished to surprise me with a display of his skill in shooting.

'By all means,' I answered readily, not at all unwilling to see what he could do, and to show him also that I knew how to handle a pistol pretty well.

He was a good shot, and took a pride in his work, laughing boastfully when he sent his bullet three times in succession into the bull's-eye of the small target.

'I'm strange to the pistol, of course; but that's not bad for a first attempt, eh? I'm a bit out of practice, too, for I haven't a place like this to keep my hand in.' There was a sneer at me in this.

'Come to the further mark,' I said, putting him half a dozen paces to the rear. 'You shoot well.'

He tried from the further mark and hit the target each time, but only once got on to the bull's-eye.

'It's a long distance, and the light's rather bad. Do you shoot much?'

'Well, a little. I have only had two or three shots here;' and I picked up a revolver carelessly. 'I am sorry you found the light bad.' I turned, then levelled the pistol and fired half a dozen shots in rapid succession.

'You have missed,' he cried, laughing gleefully.

'I think not. You will find the six bullets in a ring round the bull's-eye. I never miss.' I spoke with intentionally boastful swagger.

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He went up to the target and examined it, and then turned to me:

'By the Lord, you're a wonderful shot. Where did you learn that trick?'

The unfeigned surprise and admiration in his tone pleased me. He would know now, at least, that I was not a man to be trifled with; from that moment his manner towards me changed, and his bluster and swagger decreased.

'I am very fond of pistol practice,' I answered quietly.

He went up to the target again and stood before it, scrutinising the marks of the bullets as though I had performed a miracle.

'I never saw anything like it. It's wonderful,' I heard him mutter to himself. Then in a louder tone to me: 'I should like to come here for practice, Count.' But I had no mind for that.

'It would not do, I'm afraid. If we are to make this business a success, I must be as slightly associated with you as possible.'

'Yes, that is true—and shrewd enough. You won't want recruits if you can teach them to do that,' pointing to the target. 'And are you equally clever with the foils?' I could have found it in me to laugh at the change in his manner. He was like a man who had come to bully and had unexpectedly been whipped.

'No, a long way from it. Would you like to try?' But he declined on the plea that he had no time. His refusal surprised me, for I had heard that he was a splendid fencer, and was somewhat curious to see how far he was my superior. I concluded that he was unwilling to show me how really skilful he was, and had to content myself with the evident impression my skill with the revolver had produced.

He left me soon afterwards, expressing another hope that we should be friends; but I was as guarded in my reply as I had been before, and certainly no more cordial.

I was glad of the visit, however. He had solved the difficulty which had been perplexing me. It was evident that the Princess had said enough to lead him to think that I was working on his side, and I was convinced that he would say as much to General Kolfort, and thus unwittingly render me a service.

That our dislike was mutual I had no doubt. He had come resolved to patronise and, perhaps, to ride roughshod over me in his swaggering, overbearing way; and his performance with the pistol had been intended to intimidate me, by proving that he was as dangerous to quarrel with as he was powerful as an ally. But my display had changed all that; and in a degree had humiliated

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him in my eyes at the very moment when he was keen to appear most formidable.

He was a man to take such a rebuff badly; and for the future I felt he would be no friend of mine. Whether he would dare to be an enemy depended upon his skill as a swordsman; and that he had carefully kept hidden from me.

Nevertheless, he had cleared one tangle from the skein of my difficulties, and I was therefore glad of the visit. Whether he would seek to show his enmity openly I did not trouble to ask myself.

CHAPTER XI.

BETRAYED.

THE next few days were crowded ones for me. The organisation of our conspirators went forward with astonishing success—the fruit, of course, of the previous efforts of Zoiloff and those working with him; and when we held our first big meeting to inaugurate our new 'Club,' we had nearly three hundred splendid young fellows zealous to pledge themselves to the finger-tips in the cause of the Princess Christina.

Each of them had been presented privately to me, and each promised unreservedly to follow my leadership. All were animated by the most patriotic enthusiasm, and many of them were in a position to influence considerable numbers of their compatriots.

The scheme of the Gymnasium Club evoked great praise, and I was surprised by the ardour with which they threw themselves into the task of athletic training. All the details of this were managed by Zoiloff and a few carefully chosen men under him; and after the first meeting these leaders supped with me, and many were the exuberant anticipations of success that found expression. Zoiloff himself threw aside his customary reserve, and led on the rest to praise me.

'It is the finest movement ever started in Bulgaria, Count,' he said to me when Spernow and he and I were alone. 'And it will spread like a heath on fire, from here to every town and centre in the country. In a month we shall have such power and influence as never before was wielded by anyone here;' and Spernow was equally enthusiastic.

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'I am astonished, I think, by what I have seen to-night,' I said.

'Ah, you don't know my countrymen,' exclaimed Zoiloff, whose eyes shone and sparkled with the fire of feeling. 'They have been crushed under the curse of the Crescent; they have groaned under the oppression till the fire of patriotism has flickered low indeed, for there seemed no gleam of hope; they have suffered, God alone knows how bitterly and drearily, till the iron was like to enter their souls and corrode every generous instinct and fervour; but, thanks be to God, those instincts are not dead, and we shall rouse them into an activity that will startle Europe and save the Balkan States. We have done much in the past few years, as you know; but that is nothing to what we shall yet achieve. Were the Prince other than he is, the hand of Russia weighing less heavily on him, and their dastardly work of suborning and sapping the truth and honour of the prominent men of the country less deadly, we should not now be cowering and cringing under the talons of the Eagles. Think what it has been to work always under leaders whom we doubted and distrusted for traitors. But that is changed at last. We will have no more of the old leaders. It is the age of young men; and, by the God that made us all, we'll never stay nor falter now till the glorious end is reached.'

'Good!' said Spernow, in a rousing tone of concentrated earnestness. 'Good, and true, every word of it.'

'No looking back, that is the spirit I honour!' I exclaimed, infected by their enthusiasm, and thinking of the Princess.

'A toast!' cried Zoiloff, jumping to his feet, his eyes flashing, and his rough, rugged features aglow, as he raised his glass on high. 'May the hand that holds this glass blight and rot if it ever falters or turns from the righteous cause—In the Name of a Woman!'

'Amen to that,' said I earnestly, as Spernow and I repeated his words, and finished solemnly together—'In the Name of a Woman.'

'I have never dared before to be enthusiastic, but you have inspired me, Count. We have a leader in you who will carry us far, and whom all will come to trust as I do;' and Zoiloff gave me his hand, holding mine in a grip that trembled under his excitement.

There was, however, a source of danger that these two knew nothing of, and I could not tell them—the fear of the Countess Bokara's violence.

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For the few days I had succeeded in evading her I calculated that she would attempt nothing by herself, but would endeavour first to use me for the work. She had said as much when I had seen her in the presence of the Prince; and it was, of course, obvious that if she could secure my aid her task would be vastly easier. I had the *entrée* to the Princess Christina's house, as she knew, and could thus, were I so minded, render her just the kind of assistance she needed. But I knew she would act soon.

My anxiety on the score of General Kolfort's intention to get me out of his way had been removed as the result of the visit of Duke Sergius coupled with what the General had heard from Spernow, and probably from the Princess herself. He did not send for me and I did not seek him, but on the morning following the meeting at my house he put himself in my way as I was returning from my military duties.

We were both on horseback, and I was passing him with a salute, when he reined up his horse and stopped me.

'You have not come to me, Count?' he said curtly.

'And do not propose to come, General,' I answered in a similar tone.

'I was not wrong in my estimate of you, I find.'

'I do not recall it for the moment,' said I indifferently.

He looked at me and smiled grimly.

'Good. A little open antagonism to me is your shrewdest course. I understand you. You are what I thought—a very clever young man. And you can assure everyone that you are not pledged to me—openly. I understand you, I say.'

'As a well-known judge of men your opinion is flattering, General,' I answered ambiguously.

His smile broadened.

'Very non-committal, as usual. And yet——' And here his smile vanished, and his eyes took an expression of deep penetration. 'Be careful that your cleverness and ambition don't carry you too far. If that time should come and I have to act, remember that I warned you. I know what you are doing, and am watching you carefully.' Then in a lighter tone he added: 'I am glad to hear such good accounts of your military work, and glad, too, that I have not to compel you to leave a country that has such sore need of the valuable services which a man like you can render it.'

And with a salute he passed on, leaving me to digest the irony and hidden meaning of his last words. I rode on thoughtfully to

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my house. The impression he left on my mind was perhaps just such as he had designed—that the attempt to trick him was indeed like playing with fire on the top of a powder-magazine. And I was profoundly uneasy as I thought of what that might mean to the woman whose safety and success were now infinitely more to me than my own.

At my house a surprise was in store for me. A carriage was at the door, and the servants told me that a lady was awaiting me.

I went to the room at once and found the Countess Bokara. She rose with a smile as she held out her hand.

'You look magnificent in your regimentals, Count. And I suppose you have been too busy with your new duties and new friends to think it worth while to see me. And you don't seem over-pleased that I am here now,' she added, for my face clouded at the sight of her. She was a bird of ill-omen, as I knew.

'What is your object in honouring me with this informal visit?'

'Informal! Where is the need of formality between you and me?' she asked quickly.

'In Sofia the tongues of gossip run glibly.'

'You have soon developed into an authority on the manners of the people here. Spare me your cant, I beg of you. What do you suppose I should care if all the old gossips in the city talked me over till their tongues ached? You ask why I am here. I wish to see you, that is all.'

'I am at your service,' I answered, with a bow.

'Are you? That's just what I wish to know,' she replied, putting a significant meaning to my conventional phrase. 'You have not given much evidence of it as yet. I should rather think you have even forgotten your promise to serve me.'

'I am, at any rate, ready to listen to you.'

She looked at me piercingly during a rather long pause.

'If I thought——' she began, but checked herself abruptly.

'Your thoughts are always shrewd,' I returned.

At the reply she looked up and laughed, with such an expression of malignity that it made her face hateful, for all the beauty of her eyes.

'You little know how shrewd this time, Count Benderoff, or you would drop that insipid conventionality, I promise you.'

'You are pleased to speak in riddles.'

'Yes, because you act them,' she retorted, almost fiercely.

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'But I promise to be plain enough before I leave you. I will drop the one if you will drop the other—but, there, you'll have to, as you'll soon see.'

'I do not pretend to understand you,' said I.

'Well, then, I'll try to make you. You are not generally dull. Tell me plainly, if you can, on what side are you in all these matters? The question is merely to give you a chance of being frank with me, for I know much.'

'I seek the same object as yourself—the freedom of Bulgaria.'

'Ay. In the Name of a Woman, you mean? You think I do not know your canting phrase.'

I was on my guard now, and did not let her see my surprise at her words.

'I have the honour to bear a commission in the Prince's own regiment, as you know,' I answered, evasively.

'The commission I got for you. Of course I know. But what do you mean by that empty answer? Are you for or against me? For Heaven's sake try to speak frankly! Nothing else will serve either you or me in this.' And she stamped her foot with a gesture of impatience.

'So far as our aims are in common, I am with you.'

'Do you think an answer like that will satisfy me? I am beginning to understand you; and if my reading is right, you and those with you may well take heed for yourselves.'

'If you have come to threaten me——' I began, when she broke in:

'I have not come to threaten. I have come to have a clear understanding; that is all. And I will have it,' she said, impetuously. 'I will give you another chance. What did the Prince say to you when you were with him?'

'I do not know there was anything——'

'For the love of Heaven, man, drop this conventional cant and speak as plainly as you can if you wish. What did he say to you about this mad intention of his to abdicate?'

'Intention to abdicate?' I echoed, as if taken by surprise.

'Which means that he did tell you, and you would now pretend that he did not.' And, yielding to a sudden storm of passion, she broke out into a torrent of indignant reproaches of what she termed my breach of trust in not telling her.

I did not interrupt her, and gathered that she had only just heard from the Prince what he had said to me. I understood now the cause of her visit and the reason of her passion.

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'As his Highness told me in confidence, I could not betray it,' I said as soon as I could get a word in. 'He no doubt told you that he laid a charge of secrecy upon me.'

'And you did nothing to dissuade him, nothing to stop him from a madly suicidal step. You, who pretend to pose as a disinterested friend of Bulgaria devoted to him and to me! And do you think, knowing me as you do, for all your flippant lip-service to the jargon of conventionality, that I will let this thing be? Do you think that I am so powerless a fool that I cannot stop it? Oh, I am a mad woman when I think of it!' she cried desperately. 'It can be stopped and must be—do you hear? must; and you must help me.'

'I cannot see how I can help you.'

She had risen from her chair and was pacing the room in her anger and now came close to me, and in a tone of concentrated energy and fierceness said:

'The death of that woman Christina will stop it; and in that you can help, ay, and you shall help me.' Her face was ablaze with rage and hate as she uttered the Princess's name.

'The Prince himself is opposed to any more bloodshed,' I said bluntly. 'The sentiment does him infinite honour, and I share it.'

'You dare to say that to me? To set me at defiance? To go back upon the pledge you gave? Are you a coward, Count Benderoff?'

'I will be no party to the assassination of the Princess,' I answered sternly.

'You defy me?' And, laying her hand on my arm, she stared into my eyes for some moments in silence, and then, her lips curling and her face so hard and set that the nostrils dilated with the vehemence of her anger, she added: 'I could kill you.'

Clearly it was to be open war between us, and I prepared for it. I drew my arm away and answered coldly:

'I think, Madam, this interview has lasted long enough.'

She started as if I had insulted her, and I looked for another passionate outbreak. But it did not come. Instead of that her expression underwent a complete change and she laughed.

'Poor fool!' she cried in a bantering tone. 'Do you know where I shall go straight from here if you turn me away? Wait a moment and I will tell you.' She paused, paying no heed to my gesture of anger. 'In the Name of a Woman, eh? This excellent house, this sumptuous display of wealth, this clever,

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shrewd Englishman, with his hatred of plots, this attractive idea of a gymnasium club—what does it all mean?' And she leered at me with a look infinitely cunning.

I kept my face quite impassive as I met her eyes.

'Would you like to tell me the inner secret, or shall I tell you? I know—I know everything.' She paused again, but I gave no sign; and then the rage began to return to her face, and her tone grew vehement again. 'It is a lie—and a lie against the man whose eyes I can open with a word. You are working and plotting for the Princess, In the Name of a Woman, are you not? And these Russian fools and dolts think you are working for them at the same time. But I know your real intent. To fool them up to the moment when you can throw off the disguise—to put this precious Princess on the throne, and then to snap your fingers in the face of the old dotard, Kolfort, and obey only the Princess. This marriage, on which he counts so much, is never to take place; but when you have rallied and organised these members of your club, as you call it, you reckon you will be strong enough to throw over the Russians and declare for what you call Bulgarian independence. Independence, forsooth, with such a woman as Christina on the throne.'

I knew now the extent of the sudden peril, but I thrust the fear that filled my soul for Christina's sake out of sight and laughed.

'You have a lively imagination, Madam!'

'Yes; turn it aside with a scoff or a sneer if you think you can. But do you believe General Kolfort will think it nothing more than the subject of a sneer when he learns it?' She was disappointed that I showed no sign of fear.

'You can take your own course, and if you think to help yourself or the Prince by filling the air with your fables, do so.'

'You are a coward, Count Benderoff,' she cried hotly, 'to play thus on my helplessness. I know that I cannot help my Prince or strengthen his position by telling what I know, and what you dare not deny, to be true. But if I cannot help my cause, I can at least revenge myself, and I will. A word from me and where will be all your plots and plotters? Your club will exercise then in the yards of the gaols and behind the walls of Tirnova fortress. I tell you, you dare not play me false.'

I knew the grip she had on me now could tighten in a moment into strangulation, with the ruin of every man and woman among us; but I maintained my impassive, stern expression.

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'If you choose to spread these tales, I cannot stay you,' I answered.

'Will you help me to my revenge upon the woman Christina?'

'What do you mean by revenge?'

'Death,' she cried fiercely.

'I would slay you with my own hand first,' I answered, the passion in me rushing to utterance.

She laughed again vindictively and hatefully.

'So it is true, then, she has bewitched you. I might have known it. I told you and warned you that she was a vampire using up men's lives with the unpitying remorselessness of a wild beast. And you are her latest lover, I suppose!'

The slander suggested by her words maddened me.

'I can hear no more, Madam,' I said sternly.

She threw up her head with a gesture of pride.

'Do you order me to leave your house—knowing the consequences?'

I was in sore perplexity. She was a devil, and she looked it as she stared at me, her lovely eyes glowing with rage and hate and menace.

'If you have more to say it must be at another time, when you are in a different mood,' I returned.

She seemed about to burst forth again in her wild, vehement way, but as suddenly changed her mood and said:

'I understand. You wish to find a bridge over as dangerous a chasm as a man ever yet had to cross. I will see you again; but next time it will be to hear from you that you accept my terms. You are not a man to walk open-eyed to sheer ruin. I will go.'

And as she left me, sweeping out of the room, with a challenging, defiant, triumphant smile, I could almost have found it in me to kill her.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SPY.

As soon as the door closed behind the Countess Bokara, I threw myself into a chair in a condition of unspeakable dismay, rage, and chagrin at this most unexpected turn.

It spelt ruin to everything and everybody concerned in our

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scheme. I had seen and heard quite enough of General Kolfort to know full well that the merest hint of such a plot as ours would drive him instantly to desperate extremes. He would put in force every engine of the powerful machinery at his instant disposal to crush and punish us. And that he could crush us as easily as he would pinch a fly between his fingers there was not a doubt. His power was practically absolute, and he would use it mercilessly, like the man of iron that he was.

Nor was that the worst. There was a traitor somewhere in our midst; a recreant who had carried the secret in hot haste to this vengeful woman. I could not hazard even a guess as to whose was the treachery, but that it threatened the future of the scheme, should even she herself be silenced, was as patent as the fingers on one's hand.

Yet what to do I could not see, plague and rack my wits as I would, as I sat alternating between moods of consternation, rage, and searching reflection.

In the afternoon I had a horse saddled and rode out of the town for a gallop in the country, in the hope that some solution of the problem would suggest itself; and the ride cooled and sobered me.

Two things were imperative. We must find the leakage and blind the traitor as to our real intentions. Our future safety rested on that being done without delay; and for this purpose I must see Zoiloff and consult with him. As soon as we discovered the Judas among us we could take measures to deal with him. If possible, that should be done by cunning; but, failing that, averse as I was from bloodshed and violence, force must be used. But an idea occurred to me by which he could be effectively hoodwinked, and I stored it by for use should the occasion come.

As to the Countess Bokara, there were two courses. One was for me to appear to play into her hands and so gain time for our own plans to ripen—a line of action vastly repulsive to me, with all its necessary paraphernalia of deceit and lies; the other, to kidnap her and put her into safe keeping until the crisis should be passed. I knew that I could lure her to my house, and that then the necessary measures could be taken; but the cowardice of the plan made me entertain it only with disgust.

In the case of a man I would not have hesitated for a moment; indeed I would never have let him leave the house that day. But with a woman I could scarcely bear the thought of it, although this woman was vastly more dangerous than many men.

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I sought keenly for some other scheme, and for a moment entertained the idea of going to the Prince himself, telling him all frankly, and begging his aid to deal with her. But I abandoned it. I remembered he had said he would stand by the throne if he could make sure of efficient help, and I calculated that his vacillation would cause him to turn now and claim the help of our party in his defence. A worse than useless effort, as I knew, owing to the impossibility of rallying to his cause the men who had been turned from him by his weakness. Not only could we do no good for him, but we should imperil the great patriotic rising for no purpose.

I was therefore driven back upon the distasteful course of duping the woman who had thus threatened us.

'Would to Heaven she were a man!' And each time the thought broke from me in involuntary utterance, I pictured how easy it would then be to act.

As I was riding back, moody and thoughtful, I met the carriage of the Princess. She caught sight of me when I was still at a distance, and her lovely face was wreathed with a radiant smile as she checked her horses and greeted me. Mademoiselle Broumoff was by her side, and her keen, sharp eyes were quick to read trouble in my face.

'You look very thoughtful, Count,' said the Princess, 'as if heavy military affairs were weighing upon you.'

'I have been thinking out the answer to a very ingenious problem set me this morning,' I said, trying to speak lightly.

'It has been a trying problem for your horse, I should think,' she said, glancing at his flanks, which were covered with foam, for I had ridden hard.

'Not more so than for his rider, I assure you.'

'I hope it has not distressed you as much.'

'The Count carries the sign of that in his face,' said the little Broumoff, earnestly. 'I hope it is no more than a military problem.'

'All problems in Bulgaria have their military side,' I answered gravely.

The Princess's eyes showed concern. She understood.

'We must not let your horse stand while he is so heated with his problem, Count. If you would like to see me, I shall be at home in an hour from now.'

'With your permission, I will call,' I said, and saluted her as she drove on. 'I will have the searchlight of her woman's wit on

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the matter,' was my thought as I rode home; and, despite the grave and critical reason for the interview, I was yet half disposed to be glad of it, so much store did I set on the opportunity of being in her presence. I could scarcely wait with patience for the minutes to run out until I could start for her house.

Mademoiselle Broumoff was still with her when I arrived.

'You have news of some kind for me, Count?' said the Princess.

'Unfortunately, I bring you bad news, Madame.'

'It could not come by a more unwilling messenger, I am sure.

'On my honour, that is true,' I said earnestly, touched by her gentle thought.

'And half its sting will be blunted since I hear it from you. What is it? Tell me frankly?'

'Its sting cannot but be sharp enough to wound. I fear we have a traitor somewhere high up in our ranks;' and with that I told her what had passed in my interview with the Countess Bokara.

'It is ugly news indeed,' she said at the close, profoundly moved. 'And as dangerous as it is ugly. What think you of it, Nathalie?'

Mademoiselle Broumoff had turned pale with sudden consternation.

'I cannot think. It is too dreadful. What does the Count propose?'

The Princess turned eagerly to me for my counsel.

'We must either blind the Countess Bokara or get her away to a place of safety until we have had some time to act. But the leakage must be traced.'

'Who can it be, Nathalie?' cried the Princess, in a tone of dismay. 'Have you tried to cure this mad woman of her prejudice against me, Count?'

'I have had as yet no opportunity. Since my first meeting with her, I have seen her only once for a few minutes in the presence of the Prince until this morning, when she came to confound me with this news, and to urge me to join her in assassinating you.

'She chose her companion curiously,' said the Princess, with a smile of confidence that went straight to my heart. 'I hope my safety may never be in less trusty hands than yours.'

I did not trust myself to answer with more than a look, and as I turned my eyes away I caught the little Broumoff eyeing us keenly. Then the Princess startled us both.

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'I have made up my mind; I will see her,' she said.

'Christina, it is impossible!' cried Mademoiselle Broumoff quickly. 'She would murder you with her own hand.'

'The Count will guard against that at least, and he will arrange the interview. Will you not?'

'I would do much to serve you, but this would be a hazardous step, and one that can scarcely lead to any good. You can have but the faintest idea of her hatred of you.'

'Then I can learn it for myself. I will see her;' and her tone was decision itself. I continued my attempt to dissuade, but without success, and she would not rest until I had agreed to arrange a meeting at my house. One stipulation I insisted upon —that I should be present.

'I should wish that,' she assented. 'I do not mean to run any risks, and I should feel safe only if you were there, Count.' The words were sweet enough to my ears, but they did not allay my alarm on the score of the interview. I yielded all against my judgment, and arranged to try to get the Countess Bokara to my house on the following afternoon.

When that was settled I lingered on, inventing pretext upon pretext for my stay that I might steep my senses in the charm of her presence, the light of her eyes, and the music of her voice. Nor did she seem unwilling for me to stay, as I noticed with rare delight.

But under all the pleasure of this fascinating dalliance a current of earnest thought was running in my head, and when I left her I had already formed a plan, for which I proceeded at once to make preparations.

I had no hope that the Princess would reap any benefit from the coming interview, for I could not see a possibility of any good resulting. But I resolved that if she failed I would have my own plan in readiness. If the Countess Bokara came to the house, she should not leave it again except to pass into some place of security until our plans were complete.

I sent at once in quest of Zoiloff, therefore, and, having explained everything that had happened, outlined my scheme.

'You are sure that she really knew, and was not merely making a shrewd guess?' he asked. 'I cannot think of any man among us who would turn blabber. But if I find him——' He left the sentence unfinished, but the threat was the more expressive.

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'Yes, yes, there are twenty ways of dealing with a man,' said I; 'but a woman is different.'

'A traitor is a traitor, never mind the sex; and I see no cause for mercy for one more than another,' he growled into his beard, his look very set and stern. 'But what is your plan?'

'That we prepare a couple of rooms here in my house, and keep her until we can find some other place equally safe and secret.'

'Is this secret? Are you sure of your servants? May we not look for the leakage among them?'

'Spernow found them for me,' was my answer.

'Would you change them?'

'Every man and woman to-morrow, if you can fill their places.'

'I can do that,' he assented quickly. 'Wait—better—can you let me see them all? I may spot the traitor, or at all events separate the sheep from the goats.'

I rang the bell and sent for my steward. When he came I told him to get the servants all together, and send them in to me one at a time, as I wished to question them separately about a certain paper which I said had been mislaid.

They came in one by one, and we so arranged the position that each stood in a strong light for Zoiloff to be able to watch them as I put a short string of questions. He put a black mark against three whom he regarded as suspicious. The rest, he declared, were above question.

'My opinion is that one of those three men is false and a spy, presumably in the service of this woman. I expect they have been eavesdropping when you and I and Spernow have been together, and perhaps have caught some unguarded words. The thing is very ugly. What shall we do?'

'Fool them with their own tactics,' said I readily, thinking of my original idea. 'Let us have a hurried meeting of men whom we can trust, have it to-night, explain the position hurriedly, and pretend that we are disclosing to them the real object of the plot—to work nominally for the Princess, but really for the Russian party—and have these suspects so placed that they can hear what is going on. Then catch them in the very act; and send them packing with this new version of the thing in their minds, after a pretty good fright, and under oath not to reveal the story.'

'Yes, it will serve; but it will want adroit management,' said Zoiloff.

'You say my steward is a man to be trusted?'

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'Absolutely. I know him well.'

'Good. Then leave that part to me, while you hurry off and bring in about a dozen of our men. Let their arrival be a little dramatic, to give colour to the drama, so that the spies may think the meeting too important to be missed; and I will answer for the rest.'

As soon as he had gone I called my steward and told him plainly that there was a spy in the house, and that we suspected one of the three men I named. Then I outlined the arrangements he was to make—to get as many of the other servants out of the house as he could without creating suspicion, and to give those who remained work to do in other parts of the house, so that the three should be free to spy upon us; that then he should set them separately some light kind of work close to the room in which I directed the meeting was to be held, of which he was to drop a hint. He was a shrewd fellow, and entered readily into the matter.

'One of them is no traitor, sir,' he said, naming him. 'I can answer for him with my life. I have known him for many years, and I am sure of him. The others I do not know and do not like.'

'Never mind, test all three; and as the clock strikes eleven be at hand to watch them and await my orders.'

He went at once to do as I ordered; and that he did the work shrewdly the sequel showed.

Zoiloff returned very soon with Spernow and another man, and I received them in the room which had been prepared as the stage for our little drama. When the others came, I noticed with a smile that each was cloaked; and in all we made a party of fourteen. We smoked and had wine until I calculated that the spies would be at their posts; and then, speaking in a tone lowered but sufficiently distinct to reach any eavesdropper, I told them that the hour had come when we thought it necessary to make a most important disclosure of our plans. While working apparently for the Princess, we were, in fact, Russian agents pledged to the Czar, and bent upon putting the Princess upon the throne solely in his Majesty's interests; and I went on to declare that the hour had come to strike the blow, and so on.

A discussion followed, in which objections were raised and answered, while I kept my eye upon the clock until the hand was approaching the hour of eleven, when I rose and declared that this was the moment when each man must declare himself.

My rising was, in fact, an agreed signal, and Zoiloff, Spernow,

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and another man stole noiselessly to the spots where I knew any listeners would be sure to post themselves.

As the clock was on the point of striking, the two doors and a window opening to a conservatory beyond were flung open, and one of the spies was caught in the very act of eavesdropping.

'We are betrayed, Count,' cried Zoiloff in a voice of thunder, dragging in the man, who, shivering and white with fear, wriggled and struggled to free himself from his stern-faced captor.

A solemn hush fell on the room, while the trembling, panic-stricken wretch was placed in the midst of the men who closed round him. The silence was grim enough to have tried stronger nerves than his.

'What is the meaning of this?' I asked sternly, breaking the silence.

'I was not listening, my Lord; indeed——'

'Don't lie to me. What did you hear? Quick, speak the truth, for your life hangs on it.'

'I heard nothing, I swear I did not. I was only——'

'Silence!' I thundered, 'if you have nothing but lies to tell.' He threw himself at my feet and begged for mercy.

'Speak the truth, then,' I said.

He glanced all round the ring of stern, hard-set faces and threw up his hands, and then clasped them before his face in despair.

'Gentlemen, you have seen for yourselves; what say you?' I asked.

'There is but one punishment for such an act—death!' cried Zoiloff, in such a ringing, merciless tone that the rascal's heart may well have sunk within him. 'Death, if he will not speak.'

'Death, if he will not speak,' echoed the rest.

At this Zoiloff drew his sword, and at the clash of the steel in the dead silence the wretch moaned.

'Will you speak, or die?' I said, after a moment.

'I heard only a little,' said the man after a struggle, his lips so dry and parched that he could only speak with an effort.

'Tell it!' I thundered again; and word by word he told us that he heard me declare that we were Russian agents, and all that followed.

His fear of the death that he believed imminent was sickening to behold, and made me anxious to close the scene.

'You have heard this wretch's confession, gentlemen; what say you?'

'He must die!' cried Zoiloff. 'In the name of the Czar I

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claim his life. Every Russian interest in the country is in peril while he lives.'

'You will vote, if you please,' I said. And we went through a form of writing each man's decision on paper.

'The verdict is unanimous,' I said, glancing at the paper. 'You must die. I would have spared your life, but I am powerless against all present.'

At that he clung to me, clutching at my hands and at my coat, praying, beseeching, imploring, and vowing that he would never say a word of what he had overheard.

'Whose spy are you?' I asked.

'I am in the service of the Countess Bokara.'

'Wait;' and I left the room, wishing to confer with my steward as to the other two suspects. The steward assured me that he had found them just where they had been directed to remain. I went back to the room, and the wretch broke out again with cries and wailing and prayers.

I could bear no more of it, and put an end to the scene at once.

'Gentlemen, I have heard some strange reports with regard to this man. We will, with your leave, postpone his punishment and I will be answerable for his safe custody.'

'Deal with him as you will, Count,' said Zoiloff. Calling in the steward, I gave the man into his keeping, and they left the room together.

The meeting broke up soon after; and Zoiloff remained only a minute to exchange congratulations upon the success of the ruse.

'We have the spy, and to-morrow we will deal with his employer;' and his look was as black as a thunder-cloud as he spoke.

(*To be continued.*)

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At the Sign of the Ship.

HERE is a pretty piece of Russian Scandal. An American paper publishes 'Close-Range Studies,' which include a very long and wide shot at a yarn about myself. After saying that my *genius* is doubted (rather!), it is observed that my Golf is confessed to be excellent. Well, of the two, I fancy that my 'talent' for Golf is the more beyond all room for difference of opinion. However, it seems that, at a public dinner, I sat between 'a budding funny man and a diabolically deaf Socialist,' and was bored. *But*, it turned out that the Socialist was *not* deaf; he only pretended to be deaf, because he found in me 'an idiotic middle-aged gentleman who did nothing but talk of Golf.' This paragraph is entitled 'A Cruel Joke.'

* * *

The strange circumstance is that the myth contains a germ of fact. At a public dinner, years ago, I had a vacant chair on my right. On my left was a justly celebrated humorist, and on *his* left was one of the leaders of the Jacobite party, who happened to be deaf on his right side. Beyond *him*, on his left, there was nobody: he sat at the end of the table. Therefore he had no chance of conversation, being deaf on the side of his only neighbour, the humorous writer. I therefore suggested that the Jacobite should take the empty chair on my right, whereby he at least could hear what I said, while my companion on the left, of course, lost nothing, as the Jacobite was deaf on his own right. Nothing, I think, was said about Golf, but a good deal of treason was probably talked, on my right. By simply turning a Jacobite into a Socialist, and neglecting to note my simple but successful tactics, the American myth-maker has made his paragraph, and earned his dollar. But, Lord, what infinitesimal things are thought worth print and paper!

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I never read Smollett's novels through before this winter, and now Mr. Henley's essay on Smollett, prefixed to Messrs. Constable's new edition, enables me to compare impressions. The edition, by the way, is handsome, but heavy in the hand: probably an adaptation of the old *format* of The Author's Edition of the Waverley Novels would have been more alluring. As to biography, I would have been glad to see a word or two more about Smollett's grandfather, Sir James of Bonhill, 'a commissioner for effecting the Union between the kingdoms.' For honest Sir James declined, though a Member, to attend the first Union Parliament. 'I had no freedom to do it,' he says in his Covenanting style, 'because I understood that the great business to be agitated therein was to make laws for abjuring the Pretender . . . . which I could not go in with, being always of opinion that it was hard to impose oaths on people who had not freedom to take them.' There were few Whigs so liberal as Sir James. Mr. Henley is, I believe, right in refusing to regard most of *Roderick Random* as autobiographical. Smollett was not so ill-treated by relations and masters as Roderick. But Smollett was certainly indiscreet, and blame was cast on his connections. That his countrymen have held part of Roderick in London 'for the unpardonable thing' I deem unlikely. Scott and Moore did not: and, to tell the truth, I doubt if Smollett is not well forgotten by his compatriots: forgotten, if not forgiven. The ferocity of Smollett's vanity (as in the case of his impossible tragedy), and of his revenges, is undeniable. He knew himself to be 'meanly jealous' on occasions, and confessed his fault. His Latin account of his own temperament, written for a physician abroad, explains much. His 'nervous system was exceedingly irritable, and subject to passion.' He was jealous of Fielding, and insulted him, 'the initial insult.' Fielding hit back, but the commencement and odious conclusion of the strife were Smollett's. Yet I hardly think that Tobias resented the social position of Harry. Both were gentlemen of coat armour, though Fielding's line was the more illustrious. One does not hear much of Fielding in society; he wooed his 'bunter Muse' in the company described by Horace Walpole. Smollett's jealousy must have been literary, not social; besides, Lyttelton had been of service to Fielding, and had failed to be of service to Tobias and his unacted tragedy. Hence this fury. Mr. Henley justly notes the 'attempts at terror' in *Ferdinand, Count Fathom*, as novelties. The false apparition of Monimia preludes to Mrs. Radcliffe's ghosts that are no ghosts,

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but, of course, is below the level of the great enchantress. Novels, even the best, cannot have been profitable in those days. After trying Osborne, with *Roderick*, Smollett published *Peregrine Pickle* for himself. If the experiment had been successful, he would scarcely have turned to critical and translating hack-work, and to his History. He would do better with novels, now, than with a History, though his (strange to know) brought him 2,000*l*. He did not vex himself much with original authorities, and hunting of 'sources.' Still, Sir Pitt Crawley thought his History 'less dangerous' than that of Hume. As to the comparison between the rude hospitality to poor authors of Smollett and Constable, the only authority for Constable's grossnesses is 'Leeing Johnny,' John Ballantyne, who probably plagiarised from Smollett, or from Dr. Carlyle's oral anecdote about Smollett, and his literary serfs. Lockhart, who knew Leeing Johnny, repeats his tales of Constable, but that does not add to their authority.

* * *

I am fortunate (and singular) enough to find more merit than Mr. Henley does in *Sir Launcelot Greaves*. To drop 'a knight in armour bright' into the midst of rural England about 1760 was to attempt a fantasy beyond Smollett's power to execute. Yet the pictures of rural England—for instance, of the Election—are both instructive and amusing. Unlike his former self, but like Fielding, Smollett now shows himself sensitive to rural wrongs, and to the petty tyrannies of the parish. Aurelia Darnel is the least inhuman of Smollett's heroines, and the Mad House scenes were a novelty in 'sensation.' That Smollett ripened, that the wine of his fancy matured soundly, on the whole, we have *Humphrey Clinker* to prove. Of course, even there, his 'hard and shameless indelicacy of imagination and perception' are conspicuous: I would not say 'thanks to his Scots breeding,' as Mr. Henley suggests. The hateful qualities of Smollett are the hateful qualities of Swift, who, whether reckoned English or Irish, was certainly no Scot. It is said that 'red-haired gentlemen' are apt to be prurient, and Smollett was red-haired. He was a Yahoo of letters, and Swift was another—who can tell why? But the face of Smollett, in his portrait, is of a manly beauty, and an almost refined melancholy: it has nothing of the broad and indecent *farceur*. His Crabtree is cynical, in faith, but Crabtree blossomed into Sir Malachi Malagrowther, a more agreeable shoot of the old stock.

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You can 'unbend the mind' (Mr. Raleigh says) over Smollett. You can also laugh out aloud, alone, even if you are sad enough, over the delightful ride of Trunnion to the altar, and other passages. Mr. Henley will not allow the shade of Tobias to enter, where 'Shakspeare discusses an intonation with Dickens, and Scott and Thackeray pause in their talk to hear what's said.' I don't know exactly what is meant by 'discussing an intonation.' To judge by Dickens's blank verse he had a great deal to learn from Shakspeare. However, let Mr. Henley's meaning be what it may, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray thought Smollett's company good enough for them. Mr. Henley may keep the keys of the Paradise of Men of Letters, and may turn Tobias out. But it will not be with the consent of Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens. 'He was beloved of the boy Dickens,' says Mr. Henley, and Scott and Thackeray have both said their laudatory say. The true Smollett was only known to his Maker; confessedly was not known to himself in the plenitude of his genius. 'The half of Smollett was not told unto him,' his critic admits: yet he knew, and confessed, one of his worst faults, his 'mean jealousy.' His bad taste, *à la* Swift, he could, and did, justify to himself by many illustrious examples. (See the preface to the second edition of *Peregrine Pickle*.) But his 'hard and shameless indelicacy' stands for ever in his way: as the same quality, even colder and even more deliberately hateful, stands for ever in the way of Swift. Each man had the same *saeva indignatio* against all and sundry, just as if Jonathan, or Tobias, were the only righteous person, and did well to be angry. And so we are angry with Tobias, of whom, after all, we must make the best. 'Arrogant, stiff-necked, thin-skinned, scurrilous,' we can all be, if we choose, but we cannot also be 'humorous,' 'brilliant,' and 'hacks of genius' like Tobias. I suppose that he was a hack, not by choice, but because his genius would not support his household. If so, one must respect his motives for being a hack, though his methods were rather deplorable. A trampling, blustering, noisy critic, he occasionally sinks below the newspaper personalities parodied by Artemus Ward. But these brutalities appear to have been common in the age of Churchill, though now happily obsolete. 'Gay reading,' as Lady Mary called it, no longer makes us gay; and we can hardly adopt her ladyship's affectionate style, when she talks of 'my dear Smollett.' Tobias is not 'dear,' but Tobias is considerable,

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While my mental powers were bent on the idea of Shakspeare and Dickens 'discussing an intonation,' I chanced to look into *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for another purpose. Here I found some examples of the blank verse over which Shakspeare and Dickens may be spending the leisures of Eternity:

> If there be fluids, as we know there are,
> Which, conscious of a coming wind, or rain,
> Or frost, will shrink, and try to hide themselves
> In their glass arteries—
> May not that subtile liquor of the blood
> Perceive, by properties within itself,
> That hands are raised to waste and spill it, and in
> The veins of men run cold and dull as his did?

These are noble lines, but, as to the speculative inquiry about the blood, I conceive it to be based on a false analogy. The human temperature is not, really, affected by the circumstance that somebody means to knock you on the head, unless you are aware of the circumstance, either consciously or sub-consciously. In the latter case, you know it enough to make your blood run cold, but not enough to know that you know it, which is called a presentiment. That, according to philosophers, is the humour of it.

* * *

A correspondent assures me that the version of the *Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond*, published here last month, cannot possibly be really old. He appears to think that the late Lady John Scott was greatly guilty of the song. If so it is extremely to her credit to have furnished so much sentiment with so slight an outlay of sense. But the thing looks to me as if it had rolled along, orally, patched here and touched there, as is the way of popular songs. The difficulty is that it seems to have escaped the researches of the old collectors.

* * *

'Let no one,' says Borrow, quoted by Thormanby, 'sneer at the Bruisers of England.' One may not sneer, but, from Thormanby's own statements, in 'Boxers and their Battles,' I gather that the Bruisers of England were rather an untrustworthy and profligate set of ruffians. Take Mr. James Belcher. 'After bringing the Chicken out' (the Chicken was Mr. Hen Pierce), 'Jem suddenly turned jealous, meanly and contemptibly jealous.' So did Smollett, in Fielding's case, but then Smollett had not

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brought Fielding out. Jem (who had lost an eye at rackets) was being beaten by the Chicken, who fought very reluctantly and said, 'No, Jem, I won't take advantage of thee, lest I blind thine other eye.' Here the Chicken behaved like a Paladin. He was obliged to defeat his old master, and, while we admire his conduct, we drop a tear over the fault which Mr. Belcher shared with a great many literary characters. Again, where was English fair play when the mob interfered, and prevented an untutored African, Mr. Molineaux, from defeating Cribb? The people of —— could not have behaved worse at a football match. Tom Spring was chivalrous, so was Ned Painter, but Alec Reid sold a fight, and sold it very inartistically. 'By trade Alec was a shoemaker, hence his nickname of "the Snob."' Why 'hence'? Is 'snob' an old word for a shoemaker? If Thormanby is certain of that, let him give his proofs to Dr. Murray, Clarendon Press, Oxford, for the benefit of the English Dictionary. The date is about 1825. Even James Ward, who had such a remarkable gift as a painter, had been known to sell a fight. 'The swindle was too palpable.' Now professional cricketers do not sell matches; to be sure there is little betting. But I am sure they would not, 'if it were ever so.' Owen Swift was unlucky enough to cause two deaths in the ring, from which he withdrew. I regret to add that he 'became a hanger-on and loafer,' and 'gave himself absurd airs.' Even Jem Burn had to be corrected by Bendigo, for neglecting the morals of his pretty niece. Bendigo was of a respectable Notts family of dissenting manufacturers, named Thompson. 'If Bendigo hit Ben Caunt below the belt, Caunt tried to disable Bendigo with his knee, so it was six of one and half a dozen of the other.' 'When sober,' Bendigo was agreeable. Surely the Bruisers of England do not shine as moralists or sportsmen. A fight of Caunt and Ward was 'a farce.' Orme was so ungentlemanly as to 'put out his tongue at Nat Langham, as he lay on the ground.' Johnny Broome 'was mixed up in the famous Brighton scandal.' No, the Bruisers of England were little better, as moral characters, than the Scottish nobles of the Reformation. I do not know a more severe comparison, but it is richly deserved. Both these unwholesome sets of people could show great physical courage: an admirable virtue, but, by itself, not sufficient to extenuate debauchery, dishonesty, and positive bad manners. I congratulate America on the circumstance that her Bruisers appear, as a rule, to have been of African or Hibernian origin.

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Mr. Wilkins has made a very interesting book out of the tragedy of Sophia Dorothea and Philip Königsmarck. The discovery and editing of the letters of love and jealousy is a feat worth performing. But the murder of Königsmarck by the bravos of George I., within the palace, is better in Paul de St. Victor's version. The Countess von Platen regaled the low assassins with 'un punch;' the vast hall was lit up with the lurid flames of the beverage. Madame von Platen, mixing the materials, was *pareille à Locusta composant un philtre.* A lively dialogue between the dying lover and the rejected lady is given. Mr. Wilkins does not offer these poignant details. His object is to prove that picturesque events occurred in the Hanoverian family. George I. sickened and died, on receiving, from his dead unhappy wife, a letter summoning him to meet her at the highest Court of Justice. Doubtless the affair is picturesque; but it is also rather squalid, and hardly counterbalances the countless adventures of the Stuarts. However, what we really want in a Royal house is propriety rather than picturesqueness. In the latter quality the Königsmarcks excelled. To have killed Tom Thynne in Pall Mall, to have blown up the Parthenon, to have ruined the domestic felicity of a King, and to have produced Aurora von Königsmarck, is enough for one generation of one family. Here is stuff for the industry of the historical novelist. He might live for years on Königsmarcks. With reference to Mr. Wilkins's book—(*The Love of an Uncrowned Queen*)—may a critic hint a fault? Secret history is a delicate delight, but the secret historian should *not* express himself in the style of the *Police News.* To call Aurora von Königsmarck 'a young lady who possessed considerable personal attractions,' to write about the 'durance vile' of Sophia Dorothea, is merely to pander to my friend 'the Man in the Street.' Mr. Wilkins, by considerable and meritorious toil, has found, and has told, a good tragic story of old years. A pen stroke will rapidly obliterate, in a new edition, the traces of the style of the halfpenny evening paper—'The Bawbee Leear,' as my countrymen say.

* * *

In these sad months, one has to sorrow over many deaths. Among those, the death of Mr. Cecil Boyle (Captain in the Oxfordshire Yeomanry), in an obscure skirmish, is among the most lamentable. Mr. Boyle was a splendid example of an Englishman in character and in personal aspect. He bowled

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for Clifton College, and for the University of Oxford, about 1873. He was, with perhaps the exception of Mr. Kortright and the Rev. Mr. Barclay, the fastest bowler that I ever saw. He played football (Rugby) for England, and his Scottish opponents said that they had never seen a finer man. He was the soul of honour; and so constant to duty, that, at the age of forty-seven, he hurried to South Africa, taking many horses of his own, to serve in the Imperial Yeomanry. He gave up wealth of his own creation, and all the happiness of home, and laid down his life, at the call of his country. So remarkable was his physical strength, that, at forty-seven, he still looked young; and he *was* young, chivalrous, daring, and, in a life of commerce, he retained schoolboy honour in matters commercial. Probably his happiest hour was when riding through fire, with French, to the relief of Kimberley. In his undergraduate days, there was a great explosion of boyish spirits at his College. Several men were rusticated. He went to the Head of his College, and announced that he was deeply concerned in the affair; and insisted on being 'sent down;' a fate which would have been most injurious to his interests. I think he failed; but such was his character to his dying day: that of a modern Bayard. As such he fell: an example, to all men, of patriotism, energy, and chivalrous courage, and self-sacrifice.

* * *

We are all amateur strategists now: I do not know an easier subject than strategy, when one is not on the spot, and knows nothing about the real condition of affairs. Thus we can all condemn 'frontal attacks;' only, when a commander is tied to a railway, and has neither men nor transport for a flank attack, and yet must try to get through, I do not clearly perceive what attack but a frontal one he can make. The best reading for us amateur experts is Sir Herbert Maxwell's new *Life of Wellington*. That leader did not think very highly of the 'good people in England' who criticised his proceedings. And, when Crawford made an error of importance, he declined to report on Crawford's iniquity, because, said he, an army cannot be governed in that way. Perhaps the Duke was right. The crossing of the Douro, thanks to a Barber, a Prior, and a Colonel, is an entertaining feat of arms. Recently I heard from a friend who had been through the siege of Ladysmith. He said that it was not nearly so good as the siege of Troy, but mentioned one Homeric scuffle. It was on January 6.

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Our men had been driven off a position, and my friend, with other officers, was leading them back. He gained the skyline first, and saw, at twelve paces distant, the brave Boer commander, de Villiers, beckoning to his men. He took a shot at de Villiers with his revolver, and, though a noted pistol shot, he missed, 'at a nice gentleman's distance,' as Sir Lucius O'Trigger says. De Villiers fired at him, and missed. A., a trooper beside my friend, shot de Villiers; B., a Boer, shot A., and D., an English officer, jumped out of a gun pit and shot B., *à bout portant.* Poor D. was himself shot soon after; but the position was regained by our side. The first two officers, de Villiers and my friend, held high command, so the situation was just what Homer delights to describe, the distances being within the range of spear-flight.

* * *

One of the most eloquent and closely reasoned defences of Homeric unity, as against Wolf and the Clan-na-Wolf, which I have ever read is Dr. Edward Farquhar's 'Elements of Unity in the Homeric Poems.' It is one of a series of *Limestone College Studies*, delivered, by graduates, to college classes. Limestone is a seat of learning in 'South Carolina's sultry clime;' the *Studies* cost but twenty-five cents yearly, and intending purchasers may write to the College, Gaffney, South Carolina. We do not lecture at Oxford with such vivacity and enthusiasm as Dr. Farquhar does in a college far from the great Universities. In his opponents, the Separatists, Dr. Farquhar finds 'a lack of apparent understanding of what poetry is for.' They are not always familiar with nature. One German critic based pages of objections on the hypothesis that the Scamander, or Simois, or Xanthus, I forget which, was like a canal, and almost level with its banks. I replied that Homer was describing a rapid stream, with a high wooded bank, and with a strand of gravel at the foot of the bank, on which strand, half in the shallow water, a dying hero's body lies. Professor Ramsay, who had visited the scene, kindly informed me that it exactly answered to my idea of it. Indeed, the thing could not have been otherwise; but the learned German was thinking of a stretch of smooth water, like the 'Long Water' at Whitchurch, on the Test. Dr. Farquhar's criticism of the character of that bull-dog fighter, Aias, in the Iliad, is especially excellent: 'Here is one of the true feats of the Iliad . . . where a character, uninteresting at first, endears itself at last, to the depths, by unchangeable, dog-like fidelity and simple strength. But this most vital effect is

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impossible without the length of the Epic.' Again, there are novelties of language in the last book of the Iliad, an argument against its early date and originality. Dr. Farquhar replies: 'What a fresh wing does Milton spread at the last paragraph of *Paradise Lost*, with a number of words in a few lines—"meteorous," "marish," "adust," "subjected" (in the material sense)—found nowhere else in the poem!' Dr. Farquhar had been stating the Separatist theory, 'as judicially as possible,' to a class of school-girls, 'adducing examples from other primitive collections, which made a sort of whole, but of which the parts were probably by very different hands.' One of the girls asked, 'But are those like the Iliad, where it is all a story of such a little time, and all happening together?' That is just the difference, say, from the *Ramayana* or the *Kalevala*.

* * *

I am delighted to find that Mark Twain, giving evidence on copyright before a committee of the House of Lords, agrees with me as to 'body-snatching' and as to prolonged (Mark prefers perpetual) copyright. We are of no account, Mark and I; he is a humorist, and I am a sentimentalist. Besides we both tell what we take to be truth, with a smile. 'Infatuated old things!' cries the impetuous young journalist. So be it; but I have seldom found 'Mark's way' wrong; it is the way of honour and of sense, though it may not be 'up to date.'

ANDREW LANG.

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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

JULY 1900.

One of Ourselves.[1]

BY L. B. WALFORD,

AUTHOR OF 'MR. SMITH,' &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

'YOU DO TRUST ME, BET?'

THERE is an experience which most of us know something of. It is this. We have fixed a date to which we look forward, saying inwardly, 'We shall know by then, one way or other,' in reference to some perplexity of the present time.

The situation, we tell ourselves, cannot last—it simply cannot. Any moment may see it at an end; but, at any rate, by the given time stated it *must* have ceased to be.

And the period expires and it has not ceased; the problem has not been unravelled; we are precisely where we were.

What do we do then? We set ourselves a fresh date, and so on *ad infinitum*. That is, if we are young and hopeful.

Three weeks after the evening at the White Farm, when William Farrell was all but our little Bet's declared lover, he was still 'all but,' and nothing more.

There was a difference in his attitude certainly from what it had been before that fateful moment beneath the mulberry-tree. He had now definitely abandoned his former appearance of being the mere family friend, and no longer equalised his attentions in the scrupulously careful fashion he had once done. Poll had no more compliments on her sketches, such as incited Bet to make surreptitious attempts and humbly accept hints and corrections

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from the elated artist. Georgie's prowess on the croquet lawn found but an indifferent spectator, could not win for her a partner. It was patent to all who had won the day.

But then she had won the day on the evening we wot of.

Even Lionel, as we know, had after a brief struggle resigned himself to the inevitable. Had he been asked to sanction his sister's engagement then and there, he would have done it, and made no demur; while the younger girls would have kissed Bet and clung to her, and wept a little, and talked a great deal—and, in short, the thing would have been done *en règle*.

This was what they all expected—we may say, very naturally expected—in the first tumult of mingled feelings; and while among those at home a restless excitement now prevailed, which undermined everything said and done throughout the tedious hours of days long and monotonous except during the visit—*the* visit—the worst moment was when Lionel came home.

He never asked anything; but there was a quick look, an air of expectancy, an inattention to such items of news as had been collected for his benefit. Bet would be out of the way on such occasions, leaving the others to bear the brunt.

And Georgie, mindful of her sister's dignity, strove at first to tell with an air of gaiety and lightheartedness that Mr. Farrell had called; that he had brought a brace of grouse, or a new book, or the like. He had brought a photograph of himself.

'A what?' said Lionel, sharply.

'A very good photograph—full-length size. He gave it to Bet——'

'Ah!' He was breathless, awaiting the rest.

'I assure you she took it very willingly,' said Georgie, laughing. 'It was quite pretty to see her. And——'

'Well?' impatiently.

'Oh, there is no more to say. Our dear Billy thought he had made advance enough, I suppose. He sheered off soon after.'

She would not betray her own disappointment nor perceive his.

Again it was:

'We think we might ask the gentleman to dine here, Lin. What do you say? He has not dined here for some little time; and then you would see him as well as we.'

'Does Bet wish me to see him?' said he, plainly.

Georgie nodded.

'All right; I will.'

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'And now for it,' thought our brother, as he and his guest were left alone over their wine, no suggestion having been made of an out-door sederunt on this occasion; 'if he has anything to say to me, let him say it and be done with it.' And he passed the bottles, and let conversation drag.

. . . . . .

But when the two emerged presently from their seclusion, only one showed any alacrity for feminine society, for Lionel, muttering something about the heat of the room, threw himself into a chair at the far end and plunged into a book.

'I don't understand that fellow,' said he to Georgie when the evening was over.

Georgie had come out into the hall with the rest to see the guest depart. There had been the usual clatter and chatter; then Bet, taking Poll's arm—Poll's arm, not Georgie's—had strolled as far as the gate by Mr. Farrell's side, and their voices could still be heard dallying there, when the two within turned and looked at each other.

. . . . . .

A week had passed since Georgie took the photograph incident lightly. She was tired of feigning; she would make a clean breast of it, despite Bet. If Bet had been open with her it would have been different, but she could get no satisfaction out of Bet. 'She says I'm too young, and can't understand,' ruminated she, hurt and vindictive. 'She never said such a thing before; and though I've waited and waited, I'm still told I'm impatient. Why shouldn't I be impatient? I want to know *something*; so do we all; Lionel does, anyway. And Poll would, only she is so set up by Bet's taking notice of her and walking out with her, and telling her when Billy's coming, that she is delighted to have this go on for as long as ever Billy pleases. It's so awkward with the Massiturs, too,' further cogitated our troubled maiden, to whom the Massiturs were a godsend in the present upheaval of all things; 'they are expecting as well as we. I can tell they are by the way they steer clear of Billy. They skate off the thin Billy ice in the neatest fashion. And Bet may blush and blush, they never look at her. I wonder what they think of it?'

'Lionel,' she ventured now, 'I wonder what the Massiturs think of it?' Lionel was always most approachable through the Massitur gate.

'Yes, I wonder,' said he, but less gloomily than might have been anticipated.

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'Do they ever say anything to you?' proceeded Georgie, and insensibly moved a step outside. In another minute they were strolling down the garden in the opposite direction to the voices still audible from the other end. 'Lionel—oh, I must speak!' suddenly Georgie started, and went on rapidly: 'I don't understand—do you understand? What is it all about? I mean, of course, Billy. Why doesn't he—why does he hang back? Or is it not hanging back? Is it the usual thing? Is it what men do when they are in earnest? When they are not in earnest, they seem to—to come on so much more easily. We know all about that. We had one or two, both Bet and I, and Poll had half a one,' generously unwilling to leave her out, 'before we had you with us. They never seemed to mind; they made up to us straight away; and we responded—sort of. Oh, you needn't mind!' as he uttered an exclamation; 'there was nothing in it—nothing that mattered. We just had it out, and told each other it was no use, or something of the kind. But we never had anything like this.'

She paused, out of breath.

'You mean that Bet really cares for him?'

'Cares?' A short, significant laugh. 'You don't need me to tell you that she cares,' impetuously. 'If she didn't care, there would be nothing in it; she would speak to me, to us all. There would be nothing in it,' she repeated for want of a better phrase. 'It is not Bet——'

'It is he?'

'It is he, of course. Why does he come and go, and turn her head so that she can't see anything, or think anything, or feel anything as she used to do? It would be all right if they were engaged, but they are not engaged——' again she stopped abruptly.

'I suppose they mean to be,' said he, looking in front of him. 'We have got to face it. It is no use grumbling.'

'But that is not what I mean. I never thought of grumbling, though I did not—did not——' she hesitated.

'Did not expect it?'

'Oh, I expected it in a way. After that night at the White Farm I expected it, of course.'

'You didn't like it?'

Georgie snapped a twig between her fingers, breaking it into small pieces, loth to speak, yet unable to be silent.

'It seems unfair to Bet,' she murmured; for she knew, as did

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he, that no confidences regarding each other had ever before been made to anyone, and it startled her to be thus speaking to Lionel. Still, the case was desperate, and with a half-sigh she proceeded: 'You know, Lin, what we all felt about Billy once?'

'Oh, never mind that,' said he, hastily. Long-winded narrations of pre-Billyite days could do no good. 'You utterly mistook the man. Anyone could have told you that he was far too clever and all that to be made a fool of.'

'We found it out for ourselves; it is ages since we tried to make a fool of him. He has twisted us all round his little finger ever since our first meeting.'

'I know. Girls are such weathercocks. I suppose you are like the rest.'

'And we divided him,' continued Georgie, indifferent to the taunt. 'There seemed enough of him for us all, till,' her voice sank, and she looked round as if afraid of being overheard, even at that distance, 'till he, of himself, singled out Bet. You saw he did. Perhaps Poll and I were a little jealous,' she owned frankly; 'I don't think either of us quite liked it just at first. But when we saw it was *it*—the real thing—and that she was as much in love as he, we never for a moment thought or dreamed of even wishing to interfere. We talked it over together, and Poll said it would be a very good thing, and that we ought to be glad; and when I said something about losing Bet—because I couldn't help it, Lionel,' he knew, though he could not see, there was a quiver of the lips at this, 'Poll turned on me, and called me selfish and unnatural. She said that Bet might have married a man who would have taken her to India or Timbuctoo. And she scolded me for wanting to stand in her light—as if I would ever stand in Bet's light! And—and——'

'This isn't the point, you know,' said he kindly.

'I only meant to let you see that we were both quite reconciled. I was afraid perhaps you might have thought——'

'I never thought about it. I took it for granted you were all of one mind. What bothered me, what bothers me still, is what the deuce he means by this dilly-dallying? You say he comes every day?'

'Every day. I don't think he has missed once. Yes, once he did, and explained it. Bet was miserable that day, and so cross. She wouldn't go to Henham, hoping he would come——'

'Was that the day?'

'You remember. Lady Blanche was so nice and easy about

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it. I am sure she guessed the reason; but all she said was, "Sometimes one is glad of a quiet day at home," and never took the least further notice.'

'When we came home I saw how it had been,' continued she, as he made no comment. 'Bet was all in her best, and made a great deal of a call from Mr. and Mrs. Tupman, that deadly couple—as if she had dressed up for *them!* She did not say she had; Bet never tells fibs; but she talked about them and their brat—that odious, spoilt brat of theirs—and we knew what it all meant. And, oh, Lin, don't you recollect how she turned and rent you because you said some little thing about the Massiturs? She who was all for the Massiturs at first! She who would be now, if it weren't for Billy.'

'But they are civil enough to Billy.'

'Because we introduced him, and he is our friend. I don't think, you know—I don't *think*—they would care for him very much otherwise. Not that they have said anything. They have never said a word. And the day we took him to Henham, Lady Blanche was so polite, and seemed to lay herself out to be agreeable. She herself walked him about. But I fancy Bet has an idea—however, I may be mistaken. Only she never seems quite so keen on the Massiturs as the rest of us are, and I can't help thinking it has to do with Billy. Anyhow, you saw how she flared up at the comparison you drew between them and the other people about.'

'But I thought you put that down to her being out-of-sorts that day? Because he did not come or something?'

'It was the two together. She was disappointed—I felt so sorry for her, Lin, all the long day by herself, thinking he would come, and I dare say—perhaps—rather glad to have him alone—and then our coming back, and nothing having happened! I am sure she felt it, and was trying not to show it; and so when you gave her the opportunity she couldn't help herself.'

'I'm sure I speak little enough about the Massiturs,' said he. ('Little enough for what I feel,' he meant.)

'You might speak of them all day long for me—oh dear, must I go in?' dolefully appended Georgie, who was now in full tide, as her name rang out from an upper window. 'She doesn't like to see us so long together, Lionel,' turning to him; 'she is beginning to be so suspicious and inquisitive, so unlike what she used to be. There,' as Bet's voice again resounded with still more peremptory intonation. 'Now I shall catch it for not obeying at once,' quickening her steps.

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'But, Lin,' she paused on the doorstep, 'we haven't cleared up anything after all. I meant to ask you what you thought, and how you felt; and you have let me talk all the time, and told me nothing.'

'It will keep till next time,' said he.

'Well, till next time. But we'll have a "next time," sha'n't we? Say we shall. Say you will talk to me sometimes, and let me talk to you——'

'Georgie! *Georgie!*' from above.

'Say you will, Lionel,' holding him with beseeching eyes.

'I will,' said he. He, too, was quite grave and much in earnest. Each felt as though the preliminaries of a great alliance had been signed and sealed.

And 'next time' was not long in coming, and 'next times' came thick and fast, but still there was the same cause for fruitless conjecture and speculation, while the secret bond between the two strengthened daily, and side by side with it there sprang into being a subtle, intangible, yet ever-deepening estrangement betwixt them and the others.

When Lady Blanche Massitur issued her invitations to King's Bacon, and suggested that Lionel should bring his youngest sister on the first occasion, and that Bet and Poll should follow later, the proposition suited everybody.

It was now well into the month of September, and people who had flown off in the early days of August were beginning to return; yet the Massiturs lingered on at Henham without assigning any specific reason for doing so, while the urgency of the case as regarded Bet, and the apparent imminence of its climax, chained Lionel Colvin and his sisters to The Nook.

'We can't go anywhere till this is settled,' they told each other in private—that is, Lionel and Georgie did. 'But he might have the decency to hurry up when a fellow gets only three weeks in the year, and the summer is pretty well over,' added Lionel, whose looks indeed bespoke him in need of a holiday. He was thin and pale.

The complaint, however, was vented in accents so mildly aggrieved that Georgie, laughing, shook her brother by the elbow.

'You needn't think to cheat me, Lin.'

'How, cheat you?'

'You would sooner be taking a day off here and there, and spending it at Henham, as you have been doing lately, than be careering over the Alps. You told me the other day that it was all the same to you when you went away——'

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'Look here,' said he, waiving the question; 'if we are invited to the other place——'

'To King's Beacon? Oh, Lionel, do you mean that you would go? Why, you have always said nothing on earth would induce you to waste your holiday on one place; and though I know how much you like the Massiturs, I never supposed——'

'You are supposing a lot now;' but he did not speak ill-temperedly.

'It would be too glorious, too delightful.' For as yet nothing definite had been said so far as she knew, and hints and hopes had accumulated in her bosom till she was like to choke. 'I never supposed you would go,' cried she with a burst.

'Hush, don't make a row.' Lionel glanced round apprehensively; his own voice was naturally low, and the shriller notes of his womenkind, especially when raised by excitement, always seemed to him as if they must penetrate to ears unknown. 'Yes, why not? If we are asked. And it appears that we are to be asked. In fact, Lady Blanche spoke about it to me last night.'

'Did she—did she?'

'Only because of my having to fix a time. It was not any slight to Bet. She is going to speak to Bet at once; but she gave me her ideas, and hoped I would approve of the arrangement.'

'What arrangement—oh, what?'

He laughed good-humouredly. Evidently he was pleased—pleased more than he could express—quietly, intensely gratified by what had taken place.

'Dear Lin, I am so awfully glad.' Some recognition of those deeper feelings showed itself in a change of the speaker's tone. 'Gladder for you than for myself even. I won't say more, because I mustn't,' squeezing his arm, and peeping archly up into his face. 'But that we two should go together! Is that the arrangement? Do, do say——'

'You little firework! Spitting about all over the place.'

'I believe it is, though. Oh dear, dear me,' sighing with delight.

'Well, it is,' owned he; 'I may as well tell you. Lady Blanche's suggestion—it is awfully kind of her; she is kindness itself——'

'Yes, of course. Get on.'

'She wants us all to go to King's Beacon some time or other this autumn; but as she says it would be more amusing for us not to be all there together, we are to break up into two and two. You and I—Bet and Poll. And we are to go first——'

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'You and I? Alone?'

'Absolutely alone.'

He laughed at her awe-stricken accents.

'But I have never gone anywhere alone in my life.'

'It appears I don't count.'

'No, you don't; not in the least,' quickly. 'Not in the way I mean. You can't tell me things. And oh, Lionel, it seems so strange! I never thought of going without Bet. I thought that was what we were all waiting for. Till she was ready. I supposed we should have to have Billy too——'

'Heaven forbid!'

'Oh, he would be all right if once they were engaged. And it would be fun travelling down with our engaged couple.'

'Put that out of your mind; Lady Blanche said nothing about William Farrell.'

'She couldn't; how could she? Not till he has spoken out.' Then Georgie ruminated. 'If Lady Blanche thinks we had better come two and two, why does she not invite you and Bet together, and Poll and me? Not that I don't want to go with you, Lionel,' hastily, 'because I should like to go with you very much *indeed*,' fearful of hurting his feelings; 'but what I am thinking is, why did she choose me, and not one of them, for your companion?'

'That's simple enough. You two younger ones can't pay visits by yourselves; you have each to be taken in tow by one of us elder ones.'

'But why me with you, and Poll with Bet?' persisted Georgie. 'They know, for I have often told Leonora, how Bet and I are always together. We were once; we shall be again. Oh, Lin, it isn't that!' she cried, in pained accents. 'It can't be that! Lady Blanche can't think that Bet and I are not—not quite what we were to each other! It would be dreadful if she thought that. If she and Leonora had noticed anything. Because it is only for just now—for this little, little now—that we are not quite such great, tremendous friends as we used to be. It is *he* who has come between us,' passionately. 'Why has he? Why does he? Do men always do that? I thought they tried to be nice and pleasant to all the family when they were in love with a girl. Billy doesn't. He pretends, but somehow—after he has been here—it isn't what he says or does, it is the effect,' incoherently. 'Bet is almost always cross with me. Or else she keeps away from me. I have often wanted to tell you about it, Lin, but I didn't like. But I *must* tell just this once. It is Billy; I am sure

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it is. He has got hold of Bet altogether. He talks and talks to her alone, and she looks so flushed and odd afterwards; but she never will tell me what they have been talking about, and seems all in the clouds till he comes again. When Poll and I speak to her she doesn't hear half we say, and she never attempts to listen when we speak to each other. He lends her books, and she goes away by herself to read them. They are not—not particularly nice books, Lionel,' hesitating.

'What do you mean? Bet would never read books that were not nice.'

'She wouldn't once.'

Again the speaker hesitated significantly.

'But how do you know? Does she show you the books?'

'Never; she locks them up in her drawer.'

'You can't know what they are, then?'

Georgie hung her head.

'Have you been spying?' said he, sternly.

'Yes, Lionel.'

'If you have, I'll hear no more. You sha'n't tell me.'

He put her hand out of his arm.

Georgie burst into tears.

'It was mean; I know it was; but I did it. Mayn't I tell? It was one day——'

'No; be quiet; I won't hear.'

She sobbed in silence.

'It is enough that we are both anxious and suspicious; we won't be sneaks,' said Lionel, stalking on by himself. 'If Bet hasn't taught you *that*——'

'She did; she used to; but she is a sneak herself now.' Fresh sobs. 'And it is all that horrid Billy,' wailed the luckless alien, pattering at his heels forlornly. 'If you will only listen, Lionel, I'll say nothing about the book. I didn't read much of it. I only saw a little, and——'

'You are at it again. You are trying to tell me now.'

'We had better go back to King's Beacon, then,' faltered she, drying her eyes. 'I may talk about that, I suppose,' whimpering weakly. 'It is nothing but King's Beacon and the Massiturs with you, and it is nothing but Billy with Bet, and——'

'Anything you have to say about Bet—or Billy—that is fair and square, open and above-board, I'll listen to; but you sha'n't be a spy upon her, mind that. Now you can go on;' and he allowed his arm to be taken again.

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'I was only afraid that the Massiturs didn't understand,' said Georgie, subjugated. 'And that their inviting us apart, Bet and me, looked as if they saw there was something wrong. And it sha'n't be wrong—afterwards. We shall be all right directly that tiresome—oh, Lionel, I do want to swear!' breaking off with a gasp.

'To what?' said he, confounded.

'Only a very little one—at him. I'd do it if you weren't by. I'd say,' she paused, selecting. 'You wouldn't mind "con—blow—Billy," I suppose? It sounds nice and means nothing. We often say it.'

'See here,' said he, letting it pass. 'We may "con—blow—Billy" as much as we please, but we can't put a spoke in his wheel at this time of day. It's too late. There is one thing I am determined upon, however. When we go to King's Beacon——'

'Yes!' The clouds lifting.

'Bet does not remain here. Whatever she says, she shall not do it. Why? To look as if we were hanging on for him, of course. Mind, I don't say she would wish it; I hope she wouldn't; and it is quite likely the prospect of our all going off may spur him up. We'll talk of it before him, and see how he takes it. We'll say, carelessly, that we can't let the whole summer pass, and fake up some plan for those two;' and he proceeded to develop a plan. 'But whether Bet wishes to go or not, she's going,' he wound up, grim as a jailor.

Wonderful to relate, the grimness was wasted. Bet was not only acquiescent, she was warmly approving—had, indeed, been about to propose something of the kind of her own accord.

'I am not tired of home myself,' said she, 'but Poll is; and if you two are going off to be gay and grand at King's Beacon, it would be a very good time for us to fly to a humbler sphere. Now you see what you get by being a good brother, Lin,' proceeded Bet, playfully. 'If you had deserted us, and taken your holiday all by yourself, there would have been no King's Beacon for you, my fine sir. You would have cut your own throat, and where would you be now?'

'Lying bleeding on the road,' suggested Georgie, whose elastic spirits were on the rebound, delighted with the more harmonious family note. 'Instead of which

'In dulce Jubilo,
Up, up, up we go!'

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'What, the old monk to the front again?' said Bet, smiling. Lionel, too, was smiling; they were all smiling; a flag of truce had been raised.

'To think of us two—two little white mice like us——' began Georgie; but again it was Bet, pleasant and sociable, who interposed.

'Speak for yourself, minx. *You* are a little white mouse, if you please, and white enough you will look when you walk in through the great gates——'

'We sha'n't walk.'

'But Lionel is equal to anything where the Massiturs are concerned,' proceeded Bet, a faint inflection of sarcasm in her tone; 'he will hold his head up and steer you through. I must say it is a piece of good luck to be going to a beautiful new place——'

'And among a lot of beautiful new people; oh, I sha'n't mind. I shall Con—blow them all if they are not nice to us. But, Bet, one thing,' suddenly the speaker descended to the commonplace; 'I must have a new coat and skirt; I really must, because——'

'Of course you must, child; you will need more than that.'

'Shall I? shall I? Oh, be joyful!' Georgie's eyes sparkled, and a feminine discussion was plunged into amazing to Lionel.

Still more amazing, however, was the cool equanimity with which he listened. He was biding his time, and at length he spoke.

'So all the extravagance is settled, and now for my turn. Where will you and Poll go?' turning to Bet.

'To the Isle of Wight, perhaps,' said she, calmly. She spoke with such an entire absence of hesitation or reluctance that all at once her self-constituted guardians felt their anxiety *de trop*. She had never thought of staying behind, then?

'We know most of the South Coast so well,' continued Bet, 'and yet Poll wants the sea. Oh, we were quite prepared to be left to find for ourselves,' gaily. 'We know who are the Henham favourites, and are resigned to playing second-fiddle in that quarter, aren't we, Poll? Off you go, you two——'

'In dulce Jubilo,
Up, up, up we go!'

sang Georgie.

'Up to your heights of grandeur; while we two discarded individuals sink to dingy lodgings and the proverbial cold mutton.

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We sha'n't complain; our turn will come. Meantime you can think of us in some little scrappy village, smelling of seaweed and mussels. What's this for——?'

For Georgie's arm was round the speaker's neck, pressing it close.

'Bless the child, it is quite upset by the new frock, is it?' cried Bet, merrily. Yet as they listened it seemed to some of her hearers that they discerned a strained and artificial echo in the mirth. 'I am an ogress, am I? And it is grateful to the ogress for not eating it up, is it? Silly, if you go to great houses, you can't appear there the little ragamuffin you run about here.'

'It—it wasn't that, Bet.'

'Yes, it was; I tell you it was; I know, don't I? You are trying to wheedle me out of more than I mean you to have.'

('But she knows that isn't true,' thought Georgie, and her arm fell limp by her side.)

Poll, however, was awaiting just such a pause as followed, and caught at the chance to be heard.

'Are *we* not to have anything new?' demanded she of her eldest sister. 'Our things are as bad as Georgie's.'

'That won't matter at Freshwater.'

'At Freshwater? Are we going to Freshwater?'

'You did not know, then?' said Lionel, turning to Poll. 'I thought I understood that you two had consulted together?'

'She left it to me,' said Bet, quickly, 'and I—I fixed on the place a little while ago. Mr. Farrell recommended it.' Her colour heightened as she spoke.

'You consulted him?' said Lionel, after a pause, during which the eyes of all had been on the ground.

'I thought he was a good person to know; and he knew at once. He gave me the name of some lodgings.'

'Indeed,' very coldly.

'He is going to Scotland himself.'

All through the discussion Bet had enjoyed the thought of this moment; had gathered up her forces for it, and meant not to be defrauded of it. Once or twice already she had nearly been premature, goaded thereto by Lionel's pointed questions and watchful eyes; but it had pleased her to lull his suspicions, to lead him on, and then to disconcert him thoroughly.

'To Scotland!' he now exclaimed, as much taken aback as she could wish. 'To Scotland!' echoed Poll and Georgie; a bomb-shell thrown into their midst could not have produced a greater effect.

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'To the Stephen Farrells, I believe. They have a moor in Perthshire this year.'

'The shooting season is pretty well gone by in Scotland,' said Lionel quietly. 'When does he go?'

'Next week. At least, directly we do.'

'Directly we do? That seems rather strange,' said Lionel, fixing his eyes upon her. 'We have not been talking of going. We have only just projected it among ourselves. How came you and William Farrell to be discussing our arrangements——?'

'You can ask him that question yourself,' retorted she, biting her lips, for now the heedless phrase had undone all. 'Why do you speak of him like that? And why to me? Once you were all friends with him—now you are all against him. You,' to her brother, 'you are a man, you know how to bully another man, why don't you attack him to his face instead of hitting him behind his back? Tell him you are tired of him, you have had enough of him; forbid him to the house——'

'I wish I could!'

'No, Lionel; oh, dear Lionel, don't. Bet, he didn't mean it,' Georgie flung herself between the combatants, frightened by their passion. 'Lionel, you know you didn't mean it? And Bet, why will you——?'

'Is this a family conclave?' said a gay voice through the open window.

One by one three of the four addressed slipped away, muttering excuses and apologies, till only Bet was left with flaming cheeks and dilated eyes, betraying too well the nature of the 'conclave.'

William Farrell's glance followed the last retreating figure till it vanished; then, still standing upright, and motionless, he brought it back to the bowed head before him.

'So,' he said, slowly, 'I interrupted, did I?'

'A little quarrel,' murmured she, feebly.

'One to three. Not even sides. And one of the three a man!'—scorn in his tone. 'If I had a sister, I should know how to treat her better. What? You defend him? I might have known you would. And, perhaps, after all,' moving to her side and breathing softly in her ear, 'if I were a brother and had such a sister I might be unjust to her if,' emphatically, 'there were such provocation to injustice. You suffer for me.' Now he has taken her hand. 'It is I who am the real offender. Well, I don't blame Lionel,' continued he, after a pause. 'Brothers ought to be guardians and protectors, and yours looks at me as if I were a

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hungry lion prowling round his little fold. Good fellow, I like to see him scowl; only,' another long pause, and renewed tenderness in the low, well-modulated voice, 'only you can trust me, Bet?'

It was the first time he had called her by her name.

She made an incoherent, tremulous sound—it was not speech.

'I could not endure it if *you* were to distrust me,' continued he, with sudden vehemence. '*They* do, I know. They no longer look on me as a friend, because they suspect I would fain be more than a friend. They have never been the same to me since I had the presumption to—to show—oh, you are so good you would deny this,' as she murmured some disclaimer, 'but it is the truth; I know it is the truth;' mournfully.

What could she say?

Explain that he was labouring under some strange delusion, that so far from being alienated by his so-called presumption they were weary of his diffidence—that all he had to say was 'Be my wife,' and brother and sisters would welcome him with open arms to their midst.

The simple was the impossible, as it often is. He must be left to find out the truth for himself.

'I scarcely dare speak to you now,' proceeded he, in the same soft undertone. 'Such fierce frowns and cold shoulders bid me beware. Shall I ever win them over, do you think? Will the time ever come when I may speak openly? Oh, you think it will? That is enough. Patience, I suppose; but how easy it is to preach patience, and how hard to practise it—especially when one is shunned and distrusted. You were speaking of me just now,' continued he, confidently. 'I read it in your faces. They were abusing me; you defending me. My little champion!' Both hands were now fast in his. 'May I not thank you? May I not say what I think of you? The one true, constant, noble——'

'Please, Mr. Farrell, don't.'

'I won't, and I ought not. Some day perhaps, and *soon*——'

('Oh, why not *now?*' she thought.)

'They shall acknowledge,' a thrill of exultation in his accents, 'that I have a right. None shall come between us then. But for a brief space——' a pause, a heavy sigh, and he unlocked the small, yielding hands—'I must be content to know that I am trusted. You do trust me, Bet? You do believe in me?'

She did—she did.

Puzzled and bewildered as she was, there was no thought of distrust; instead a blind, passionate idealisation of the man who

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could thus be overcome by such a sense of his own worthlessness and her preciousness; a renewed faith in the future and fortitude for the present.

From that interview, moreover, dated a deepened feeling of partisanship with an injured and misunderstood lover, whom nobody but herself believed in; who was being ungenerously treated by those who ought to have known better, and whom coldness and suspicion cruelly wronged.

How good he was to be so humble! Devotion such as his, he had hinted, was usually unpalatable, not to say incomprehensible, to cool outsiders. They neither liked it nor desired it. He could not be surprised; though she must forgive him if occasionally he was rather grieved. It was hard to approach a door where he had once been kindly received, and find such a change.

Ere he left she burned with resentment towards Lionel, towards Georgie, towards even Poll, who had not spirit to be an aggressor, and was no good as an ally. She held aloof from them all and went her own way, sore and humiliated, lonely and isolated, detached, estranged; more and more ready as the days passed for what lay before her.

CHAPTER XXII.

'THAT BEGGAR BILL.'

'WHO do you think is here, stopping at the inn, and was on his way over to pay his respects to you and the girls, only I stopped him, telling him you were out for the day?' said Mr. Stephen Farrell, addressing his wife, and letting his game bag fall on the floor in order to mop his brow as he spoke. He had been out on the moor, and though it was the last day of September the weather was warm. 'Eh? Who do you think? That beggar Bill—Bill Farrell. I could scarcely believe my eyes. I thought he was bottled up at the bank while Tom and Charles were skylarking. I know I was told so.'

'And he is here?' replied the lady, but without the same surprise, for Ardguscie Lodge was on the highroad to everywhere, or so it seemed to her, and stray appearances were common.

So William Farrell was at the inn? Very well. She had no objection. To tell the truth, once out of Farrell range, Matilda thought but little about the family, considering who and what

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she was; and could the devoted Mrs. Tom have heard the tone of her present remark it may be doubted if she would ever again have felt quite the same towards her sister-in-law. Indifference to dear William!

Even her husband regarded his phlegmatic partner with a certain impatience.

'Well? You're not astonished? I was, I can tell you. I should as soon have thought of meeting the Khan of Tartary up there by the burn-side as Cockney Bill. What does he care for heather, brae, and mountain peak?' The speaker expanded his chest gloriously. 'Give him the cries of the newsboys and the roll of the 'buses; give him his own bank parlour all to himself, with fat Tom and thick-headed Charles out of the way, and that's all he cares about. I should have said so at least; but here he is! Sick of it for once, I suppose, and made a dash for a breath of fresh air. I told him he could not have come to a better place.'

'You met him accidentally?'

'Came upon him slap. I had just crossed the bridge, and was looking down into the pool to see if there were a chance for the boys to run up with a rod—but there isn't, the water's too high—when I heard a step, and there was Bill, all got up in Highland togs—no, no, not the kilt,' laughing; 'only smart shooting clothes—uncommonly smart too. I'm bound to say he never looked better. He must have gone to a decent tailor for once——'

'Dear me, what if he did?' cried she, roused at last. She was not a dressy woman, and her husband's penchant for fine coats and his talk about them was an occasional annoyance. 'I suppose you had something else to say to each other than to talk about tailors?' sarcastically. 'I suppose you asked him here? Though really, with Lord Umfreville coming——'

'Aye, with Lord Umfreville coming—that was what I said. We are full, aren't we?'

'Not absolutely full as regards room, perhaps.' The lady pondered and frowned. 'We could—but it makes so many for the servants, Stephen. You know we have never had a bedroom empty of late; and it is not as if we had our whole staff——'

'I'll tell Bill so.'

'Don't let him think us unkind,' uneasily. As regarded hospitality Matilda was true to Farrell traditions.

'Unkind? Well, I don't know. To be sure it does seem a

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bit thick that we can't find a dog-hole for a relation in a house like this,' and he glanced upwards, for the two were beneath the windows, and there were more of them than he liked to see at the moment. 'I can't put it on the rooms, but I can put it on the servants,' said he, tentatively. 'And as for the unkindness, we can't help what he thinks.'

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'What did you say to him?'

He had said more than he meant to acknowledge. In the effusion of the meeting, in his character of jolly kinsman and successful sportsman trudging home laden with trophies of the chase, he had been startled into a jubilant welcome followed by something that was as good as an invitation before he knew what he was saying, and had presently put the case to himself thus: 'She may say what she likes; a cousin's a cousin. Whichever of them it had been I couldn't have shut my door in his face. She may thank her stars it's Billy. Bill's not a bad chap, and out and away the best of the lot. His going to the inn showed that; the others would have thrown themselves upon us without mercy, taking their welcome for granted. Well, and why shouldn't they?' relenting somewhat. 'Ain't we all of one blood? And, hang it all! we can find bite and sup for each other without being broke for it.'

At the moment there was a curious resemblance between the ruddy-faced sportsman and a certain hook-nosed old gentleman whose portrait adorned the private parlour in Farrell's Bank: no one could have doubted the 'one blood' which was now stirring honestly enough, and seemed to infuse itself into Stephen Farrell's very phraseology. He both looked and felt and talked like an honest *bourgeois* at such times.

'Still it was deuced sensible and considerate of Bill to go to the inn,' pondered he, afresh. 'And so I shall tell her. She can invite him or not, as she pleases. With Lord Umfreville coming —good Lord!' For a thought had occurred, and he stood still to digest it.

He stood still and laughed to the surrounding solitudes, offering them the joke, as it were.

'Bless my soul! I see it all now. That's it, is it, Master Bill? The sly fox! He's got hold of Umfreville's being on the horizon, and wants an introduction to the lady's uncle, in spite of holding the uncle cheap to the lady, as I heard him do with these very ears not six months ago! Come, this looks like busi-

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ness. And when it's a case of *business* I know where I am with Billy Farrell. Now, then, what's to be done?' mused he, tramping on.

For he had a spouse to manage, and circumspection availed much with Matilda. To rush at her all exuberance, his manner compelling joyful acceptance of the news he brought, would have been to damn his cousin's chance on the instant; whereas now? And he thought out his programme carefully.

For one thing, not a breath of Lord Umfreville as a magnet. His wife did not 'cotton' to that idea; had never liked the Colvin lassies, nor accorded them the slightest consideration. If he said anything about business interests 'Mrs. S——' would be equally impervious. 'Can't stand the shop!' He shook his head. He decided to run Billy on the relation tack pure and simple.

When it was demanded of him, therefore, what he had said to his cousin he replied, with certain reservations—

'Oh, I said—said what I could. Told him to come along to-morrow and see you and the girls. Told him it was no use coming to-day——'

'You did not invite him to stay here?'

'N—no, no, not exactly. Said something generally; but of course he knows *I* don't do the inviting; it has to come from *you*. I think you know.' After a pause, during which he perceived signs of relenting, 'I think we'll have to do it, if we can. Unless we can say positively we haven't a bed——'

'I told you we could not say that.'

'We could say it so that it would be true enough. We could say we were sorry we couldn't take him in. "Take him in" may mean anything, any mortal thing. In our case it would mean on the servants' account. We are just picnicing here, with nothing comfortable—he would understand. Considering that he has turned up on his own hook, absolutely and entirely on his own hook—without any sort of invitation from us—what d'ye think? I don't altogether like to do it, but still——' and he affected a doubtful and disturbed demeanour, similar to her own.

'I hardly think we can help ourselves, Stephen.'

'Don't put yourself about, you know. I am afraid this is a bother to you. My people are rather nuisances.'

'Oh, my dear, I never said so; I never thought so; yours or mine, it is all one to me.' For the time being Matilda was a Farrell valiantly. 'I am sure your relations have always a welcome at Hay Farm.'

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'So they say. They all say that, everyone of 'em. Billy inquired most kindly after you.'

'I think we ought to invite him, Stephen.'

Now he was triumphant; now he could afford to be generous. 'As you please. Of course it is as *you* please, Matilda. Just think it over; and, if you find you can do it, I make no doubt you'll find Billy more than grateful. He can be very pleasant, too, when he likes,' and he shouldered his gun and went indoors.

It did not in the least surprise him to hear presently the trot of a horse beneath his dressing-room window, and when he saw David, the groom, take the turn towards the village in which for the present his cousin was located he smiled to himself as many a wily husband had done before him.

'She couldn't even wait till to-morrow,' chuckled he.

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'It is really very lucky.'

The words fell agreeably on the ear of paterfamilias as he entered the drawing-room, where the party were assembled for dinner.

'Papa, I am saying your meeting William and asking him here is very lucky. Max Pierpoint has failed us.'

'No?' said Stephen, pulling up short. 'Then you'd have had nobody for Lord Umfreville if I hadn't collared Billy?' cried he, with the profoundest sense of achievement imaginable.

'Nobody.'

'And your mother and I all but cold-shouldered him from the door!'

The stars in their courses were certainly fighting for Billy; a few days sooner or later, and he would have been received with at the best cool indifference, whereas now his good fortune had propelled him into the bull's-eye of the right moment to appear, and he was hailed with enthusiasm.

'Because, you see, we don't know Lord Umfreville, and he may be a regular stick,' confided Mildred to her cousin, directly they met. 'It is only papa who has met him, and one can't always take papa's word for people. Besides, we never asked him to come now; we asked him a month ago, when there was the shooting and all sorts of things going on. You don't know what to do with a man when he won't come when he's asked, and will come when he's not asked. Everything's over now.'

'Not quite, is it? Your father has asked me to shoot with him this afternoon.'

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'Oh, well,' said she, laughing. Then, with a bright idea, '*You* don't come as a stranger and a shooting man. *You* are different.'

'You are very good to say so.'

'It is no great matter to you whether the sport is good or bad. At least, if bad, you can't reproach us with it. But Lord Umfreville received a ceremonious invitation for a specified object—refused at the time, with a postscript about looking us up later—then wrote three days ago, calmly offering himself! Do you call that good manners?'

('Can't she hold her tongue?' thought Stephen, snappishly.) He never could get his family to see things from what he termed a cosmopolitan point of view.

'I should say Lord Umfreville is of the casual sort.'

It was not William Farrell's place to pronounce more definitely on his 'manners.' 'But I dare say most doors are open to him.' He wished to find out if it were so.

'There's no reason why they should be open.'

('Drat that child!' from Stephen, gloomily twirling his thumbs, unable to stop the flow.)

All unconscious, the speaker proceeded, 'He has a title, of course; and a place—or places—but he is nothing in himself——'

'*Nothing?*' shouted her father, unable to restrain himself longer. 'He is peer of the realm, and—and——'

'And?' said Billy, encouragingly. ('That'll bother him,' thought he.)

'Pshaw! It's not for me to tot up a man's merits and virtues, who is doing me the honour to—to——'

'To come when he's not asked,' laughed Mildred.

When the gentlemen were alone Stephen apologised for her. 'Girls were like that,' he said. 'She fancies I want him for one of them. It's all nonsense,' loftily. 'One may surely ask a bachelor sportsman to come and shoot your moor and be presented to your wife and daughters without having designs upon him, eh, Billy? Umfreville is not a marrying man, I should say.'

'Should you?' said Billy. ('What about Leonora Massitur?' thought he.)

'He is poor,' argued Stephen eyeing his cigar, for the two were smoking outside; 'deuced poor for his rank; and they tell me a bit of a screw too,' confidentially. 'Mind, I only heard that. It mayn't be true. Then he's not young. He's pretty nearly as old as I am; if he had meant to marry he'd have done it before

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now. You know all about that, eh?' jogging his cousin's elbow; 'you know that we Benedicts get all the kicks and none of the halfpence. Well, about Umfreville; his big place is Ughtred Manor. Stop! Yes, yes! that's the name. Your friends the Colvins, they know Ughtred Manor well, I suppose?' and he shot a glance.

'I thought Lord Umfreville never lived there,' said Billy, as if interested in the narration, which indeed he was to a certain extent. He had not planned this raid on Ardguscie Lodge without being aware that he would fall in with Lord Umfreville. He knew before his hosts did that Lord Umfreville was making up his mind to be there at a certain time. 'What can a single man do in a huge family seat?' continued he, placidly smoking.

'He'll live at it fast enough when he's married—that is to say, if he marries,' the speaker corrected himself. 'It isn't money that keeps him from it now. He has saved enough—but I'm only talking hearsay,' for he found himself insensibly letting out much that he desired to keep in. 'I only told you in order that you might see *I'm* not hankering after him for a son-in-law,' feeling that he had effectually disposed of that idea.

Billy smiled to himself.

But he found Lord Umfreville of use to him all the same. So much taken up was honest Stephen by the prospect of entertaining his noble guest, so completely was his mind distracted betwixt sporting hopes and fears, weather prophecies, and household discrepancies, that he had no time nor thought for anything else. The allusion to the Colvins above stated was the only one let fall by him during the whole period of his cousin's visit.

Moreover, 'He'll have the sense to hold his tongue till he sees how the land lies,' cogitated the diplomatist. 'Trust Bill not to put his foot in it,' which trust, we must add, was not misplaced.

Lord Umfreville was not to be sent for till evening, and William Farrell had been rattled over the fine, broad moorland road between Ardguscie village and Ardguscie Lodge soon after breakfast; so that a morning and an afternoon had to be wiled away, the former in sociable intercourse, the latter in an apology for sport, before the arrival of the great man.

'We must keep all we can for him, but we can pick down a bird or two,' quoth Stephen, apologetically. 'It's rough walking and scarce shots nowadays. I wish you had come sooner. We could have shown you some bags worth having last month.'

They did fairly well, however, and descended from the heights as light began to wane.

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'You are in good condition, Bill.' The older man, who was warm and somewhat brown, eyed the younger approvingly.

'I take care to keep so.' William looked at his watch, replaced it, and remarked on the pace at which the last mile had been covered. They were now upon the road.

'I take regular exercise,' continued he. 'Thomas does not; that's what plays the mischief with him. And I say,' suddenly, 'if you have any influence with Thomas you might do him a good turn. You could do it better than I. I'll tell you how it stands; you know I got him to go abroad? Well, it was because I didn't like his look; I know old Tom in and out, and he is in rather a bad way. He has always eaten too much, and now,' pausing significantly.

'The other thing?' said Stephen, raising his eyebrows.

'I am afraid of it, deucedly afraid of it; it is growing upon him. Here a glass and there a glass; you never know when that once begins where it will stop.'

'Good Lord, no. So that is it? I thought he looked more pulpy than usual this summer; short-breathed too. Unhealthy-looking altogether.'

'Mind you, I don't say it has got into a habit, but it *might* get. It's beginning. I did what I could for him; frightened him and packed him off to Homburg with the address of the stiffest doctor there, a fellow who won't stand any nonsense. Priscilla writes that he is ever so much better.'

'That's all right.'

'But they talk of coming home now. It's a pity they should. What I thought was, do you ever write to Tom?'

'Oddly enough, I was thinking of writing to Tom this very day, about some wire fencing. We are going to fence in some land at Hay Farm, and Tom has got the right kind; I want to know who to get it from. Well, I could put in a word?' interrogatively.

'Say that I'm here and we've been talking shop, and agree that there's no sort of need for him to hurry back; you can say it from me as well as from yourself. And from yourself you might add that if you were in his place you would—oh, you know well enough what to say now you've got the tip.'

'I can put it very strong, too.'

'From *yourself*,' said Billy, emphatically. 'He must not think we have been putting our heads together over him.'

'But I might say we have been talking over his looks and health, eh? Brotherly and cousinly solicitude, eh?'

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'So long as you stick to that you will be safe enough.'

'Does Charles suspect anything?' said Stephen after a pause.

'Did you ever know Charles suspect anything in his life?' retorted the other, with a humorous look.

Both gentlemen laughed.

'Poor old Charles!' said Billy, affectionately. For a moment he seemed as though ready to say more, but stopped himself. After all Charles was his brother.

'What is he about?' inquired the cousin.

'Dandling the baby by the sea. At Cromer.'

'Cromer? Vile place. Suburban.' Stephen snuffed the Highland air complacently. 'Never could abide those sort of villa places. Why don't you take a moor, Bill? You are not the suburban sort,' continued he, with patronising affability. 'This sort of thing is quite in your line, eh?'

Bill, however, was modest.

'I dare say you can always get what shooting you want. A bachelor is different from a family man. So Charles and Emma are at Cromer?'

'And long may they remain there.' Frankness seemed the order of the day. 'For all the good the poor old fellow is to us,' owned Billy, as though driven to say it, 'he might be at Cromer all the year round. He has been making a muddle lately——' He broke off short, as reluctant to say more. It was enough. Stephen cocked his ears.

'Usually does muddle whatever he touches, eh? Isn't that it? Anything more than usual?'

'Well, no; I can put it right—if I am let alone to do it. No, it's nothing serious. Between ourselves I am no more keen to have Charles back at the shop than Thomas; for different reasons, of course. Now if *you* were coming——?'

'Can't come just yet, my boy'—but the flattering 'you' was not lost—'not just yet. They have let me in for some country-house visits—houses the girls want to go to, and it's only fair they should—before we return south. If there is anything you want to consult me about——?'

But there was nothing, nothing in particular. Certainly nothing worth bringing a man all the way from Scotland for. 'What time do you propose returning?' inquired Billy, carelessly.

It appeared that a round had been proposed which would occupy the best part of a month. 'You see this is the time when everybody does it,' explained Stephen, quite the man of fashion,

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'I know they won't hear of Hay Farm till November, if then. Being here, we may as well knock off one or two Scotch folks to begin with. There's Strome Castle—may get a bit of deer-stalking there—and the Camerons—Sir George Cameron is an old friend of mine—and—and there are one or two other——'

'Minor cards,' urbanely commented Billy.

'Just so. Then we'll take Yorkshire and Cheshire on the way home; aye, it will be November, fully November, before you see my face in Lombard Street. But you don't want me, you don't want me; *you* are the man for the bank, Bill. Stick to it, and you'll pull us all through.'

'All right,' said Billy, laughing.

He had now completed the business which took him north, done what he wanted to do, and found out what he wanted to know. His mind was free for Lord Umfreville.

Lord Umfreville was a little bit of amusement thrown in. To meet him would be interesting and desirable; and, as we have said, his lordship's movements were so far of importance to his niece's admirer as to induce William Farrell to time his own arrival at Ardguscie simultaneously with that of the more important guest; yet had there been no such personage in existence he would still have appeared upon the scene.

But who so easy and disengaged and charmingly interested in all the little leisurely manœuvres wherewith his hosts sought to beguile the empty twilight hour as William the interloper? Had he letters to write? The post went in an hour.

No, he had none.

Would he care to read the paper? The London paper had come by the afternoon delivery.

He would not look at the paper.

'Let us simply loaf,' pleaded he. 'You can't think what a rest it is just to be here and do nothing and think of nothing. What an evening! What a scene!' gazing on a golden sunset with rapture. 'It is a luxury simply to exist; and the last thing one wants,' looking round with a smile, 'is to be reminded of the existence of others. Are you going anywhere? May I come with you?' to Maud and Mildred, who had joined the party outside. 'Will you take an idle fellow in tow? Do you ever know what it is to feel absolutely idle, Maud?'

Maud could not say she did.

'Do you?' to Mildred.

Well, no. Mildred usually had something to be busy about.

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'You don't know what it is to feel your mind utterly vacant,' proceeded he, dreamily—'to yield yourself completely to the passing hour? Then, my dear cousins, you don't know one of the greatest pleasures in life. You don't know'—he paused to smile again—'what I am feeling now.'

Again his eye took in the landscape while yet in a manner including his companions; and to suit his mood they loitered and lingered, chatting of this thing and that; now halting to note the red clouds which hovered on the mountain-tops, now to hear the low rumbling of hidden waterfalls: anything and everything seemed to please the happy idler! And who would have guessed that all the time beneath that mask head and heart were elsewhere, far, far from the peaceful spot and passing hour; and that through that brain, vaunted at rest, the blood was surging wildly?

. . . . . .

We do not propose to describe Lord Umfreville further than to say he was a small shred of a man, pale-faced, lantern-jawed, with ferret-like eyes which were for ever on the look-out for any advantage which might accrue to himself. He had no friendly friends, no relationly relations, and he promptly quarrelled with anybody who asked a favour of him.

A good deal more might be said, but is not worth the saying.

It chanced that his lordship, who liked to get his shooting for nothing, as he did everything else, heard that the civil banking fellow (poor Stephen! and he kept the bank so studiously in the background!), to whom he had been casually introduced, rented moors every now and again, on which he had condescended to talk to Stephen.

They had talked about family affairs, as we know, and by-and-by the present invitation had ensued.

Really there seems nothing more to be said, except, to be sure, that our readers have had a hint of certain aspirations which may have interested them in some slight degree, wherefore we may add that it was true that in a feeble, covetous fashion Lord Umfreville did actually contemplate annexing his neighbour Miss Massitur and her property, which, though not adjoining his own, was in its vicinity.

He had made what he thought some progress in this laudable endeavour, and Leonora, girl-like, had laughed over it in confidence with her new-found friends.

Perhaps the jest might not have transpired, but even Bet, the

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high-souled where matters within her comprehenion were concerned, saw no harm in prattling of what was so obviously in her eyes an absurdity to an intimate like the adorable Billy. This was in the days when Billy was adorable and nothing more.

The sisters forgot, but he remembered what passed on the occasion.

He was now prepared to turn it to advantage.

And he did so, as he did all things, well and skilfully. Not a word was dropped during the first evening, nor yet throughout the early hours of the following day; but that day was to be the last of the present amalgamation, and accordingly—

'You know the Massiturs?' he let fall easily, on a lounge round the doors. 'I believe I heard them speak of you when I was at Henham the other day.'

Lord Umfreville, a shade surprised, owned he did know the Massiturs. It may be added that no one else at Ardguscie was cognisant of the acquaintanceship, and that even the whereabouts of King's Beacon, to which it was understood that Lady Blanche and her niece periodically retired, was a dead letter to Essex people. The few who visited at Henham Park found conversation in its surroundings or general items.

'They are just off to Worcestershire,' continued Billy; 'and, by the way, the Colvins—hum—ah!' affecting to recollect and hesitate.

'Eh? You know them too?' said his lordship, still more surprised. 'Oh—ah—yes,' thinking out the case for himself. 'My sister's children,' shortly.

'A nice young fellow, your nephew. Lady Blanche Massitur has taken up him and his sisters tremendously. Some of them are at King's Beacon now.'

Lord Umfreville puffed his cigar.

'They have settled down in our locality, you know,' continued his companion, sociably, 'and are making themselves very popular. Lionel Colvin is as fine a young fellow——'

'What age is he?' sharply.

''Pon my word I don't know.' (A rum question that for an uncle to ask!) Aloud: 'He might be any age. He is old enough to steer his own boat, anyhow. The sisters are pretty——'

'So was their mother. A damned sight too pretty.' (The family skeleton was on the best of terms with Lord Umfreville, who was never ashamed to acknowledge him in company.) 'Look here, Mr. Farrell,' said he now: 'as you know so much you may

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as well know a little more. I'll have nothing to do with those confounded young people. I've nothing against them; their father was—was too good for her, their mother—my sister. If they take after *him*, well and good; I'm glad to hear it. If they take after *her*, so much the worse for them. And as my connection with them comes through *her*—d'ye see? Anyhow they must stand on their own feet, for I can't do anything for them, and they needn't think it.'

'I understand.'

'They told you about me, I suppose?' suspiciously.

'I don't think I ever heard your nephew mention your name.'

'Hum!' not over-pleased. 'A proud young pup, I dare say. Thinks he's as good as anybody.'

'Quite as good,' said Billy, laughing; 'and if Miss Leonora Massitur thinks so too, as I hear is rumoured——'

'Ah!'

'He may vindicate his perspicuity. "Coming events cast their shadows before," you know.'

'Damn coming events!'

Billy smoked in silence.

'Does that young fool think he is going to marry an heiress with one of the first places in the county?' growled Lord Umfreville savagely. 'He must have a cool cheek. He who was left a beggar on our hands, and had to be brought up by charity! a clerk in an office!'

'You forget that he has a very nice little place of his own now,' said Billy, suavely. 'And though I don't know what his income may be——'

'Eight hundred a year among the lot of them!'

'Indeed! A very nice little sum. Not enough to propose to a penniless girl upon, but then Miss Massitur is not a penniless girl. At any rate he has met with some encouragement, I know.'

'From that old harridan Lady Blanche?'

'I should say more likely from Miss Leonora herself. He is handsome and gentlemanlike——'

'Gentlemanlike? Of course he's *that*,' shortly; 'you didn't suppose my sister's son would be a bounder? As for his being handsome—what's he like?'

'Dark—slight—good figure and carries himself well.'

'A favourite with women?'

'That I am not in a position to tell you. I have never seen him in company with any women but his sisters and the Massitur ladies.'

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'That's enough; it's the Massitur ladies I wish to know about. Has the young scamp any chance? Or is it a piece of folly pure and simple?

'Indeed, Lord Umfreville, I am happy to tell you that I think he has a very good chance. He is at King's Beacon now, as I said. He has been invited to stay there for a fortnight, and——'

'A fortnight!'

'Looks like business, doesn't it? If Lady Blanche and her niece were not favourable he would hardly have been asked for so long a time. He and his sister—one of his sisters—went there —let me see—' affecting to consider.

'Yesterday? The day before?' Lord Umfreville eyed his companion impatiently. 'The visit has just begun, I suppose?'

'Really I can't say; but I fancy they have been there nearly a week. Such a marriage would be the making of Lionel Colvin,' proceeded the speaker, cordially; 'and I assure you it looks very like coming off; not that it is imminent. Indeed, I may have been a little premature in alluding to it; but if no other fellow comes along, and he has the run of King's Beacon for the next three or four months, I shouldn't mind backing him to win. It is everything having a clear course at the start, you know, on such occasions.'

An unpleasant smile sat upon Lord Umfreville's lips.

'That's what my nephew reckons on, is it? A hole-and-corner wooing? All kept dark till the thing's done; then to crow and flap his wings before the world?' After a minute he lifted a pair of cunning eyes. 'I think I ought to be there to back the winner too, eh, Farrell? Support the family, and all that. It would look well for Master Lionel to have the head of the house cheering him on; and though he may be at King's Beacon and I at Ughtred Manor——'

'To be sure, I forgot; your place is in the same county.'

'In the same parish. At least I suppose so; I don't know much about parishes. Anyhow there's only half a dozen miles between them. Thank you for telling me, Mr. Farrell,' with a sudden resumption of such dignity as he had begun with; 'I'll think over what can be done to further the poor boy's suit. It would be a pity he shouldn't succeed. And it would be the ruin of him if any other fellow were to *come along*, eh?' meaningly.

Before he started the following morning the departing traveller overheard the following between his host and fellow-guest:

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'I can't stop, thanks; awfully good of you to wish it. But I am due in Worcestershire—um—um—um.'

The listener drew a breath of exultation.

'So that will give our young gentleman something to think about, something to keep him busy. He won't be in a hurry to leave King's Beacon with Uncle Umph looking daggers at him and all sorts of sweet things at his Leonora. I think he'll not be able to make out the little trip to Freshwater, which was to be the finish up. He'll have to give up that idea if he's to hold his own with the heiress.'

A pause. Then, 'That wishy-washy thing, and—Bet!' said William Farrell aloud, and broke into a harsh laugh.

(*To be continued.*)

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Egypt in the Middle Ages.[1]

IT is a singular fact that the history of Egypt presents itself to most of us as either fabulously old or quite modern. We know the extremes, and we do not trouble ourselves much about what comes between. The extraordinary development of archæology during the century now expiring, the wonderful discoveries of Petrie, Naville, de Morgan, and the rest of the noble army of diggers who have sifted the sands of Egypt with such astonishing success, have made the life of the ancient Egyptians almost as familiar to us as that of Pericleian Greece. And, at the other end of the scale, recent events, personal travel, the newspapers, and innumerable books—especially the classical work of Sir Alfred Milner—have brought modern Egypt as close to us as Paris, and filled us with pride as we have watched that splendid revival of sound and masterly government which—next to that organism, which, as Mr. Skrine says, is 'the wonder and envy of mankind,' our great dependency of India—forms the most admirable achievement of English public servants in modern times. Thus we know fairly well what was doing in Egypt, say, 1900 years B.C., and what is going on there now in the 1900th year after Christ. Certain intermediate periods—such as the rule of the Ptolemies, lately brought within the reach of the general reader by Professor Mahaffy—are not quite unfamiliar. But between the time when Cleopatra sailed the Nile on her state dahabiya and the day when the Empress Eugénie opened the Suez Canal to the ocean liners there is a great gulf fixed, across which, *rari nantes*, only a few detached events or names float. The accident of a moving romance has rescued the age of Cyril and Hypatia from popular oblivion; the genius of the immortal Scott has created for us a true type of Saracen knightliness in 'The Talisman;' and the devoted Sieur de Joinville has led us in the footsteps of his heroic

[1] A lecture delivered at the Royal Institution, April 28, 1900.

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master to the fatal field of Mansura, where the chivalry of France was trampled under the horsemen of the Mamluk queen.

Yet the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs was not the least important phase of that colossal wave of expansion which fills one of the most wonderful chapters in history. That great and sudden rush of an obscure and numerically insignificant nation to the eastern and western boundaries of the Roman Empire, and almost to the limits of the *orbis veteribus notus*, is the most amazing event of the second millennium of our era. There seemed no adequate reason why the flood of conquest should stop when and where it did. The zeal for God and his prophet was still hot when the Saracens were turned back at Tours, and though Europe may justly be proud of her Charles Martel, we may be sure that if the Arabs had really been minded to plant a mosque at Paul's Cross, where a shivering muezzin should chant the call to prayer in a London fog, the army of the Franks could not have stopped them. It was not Tours alone that saved England from becoming a province of the caliphate: we must also thank our enviable climate. The Arab realised that in the lands of the Hyperboreans there was no sun worth basking in. Of all the surges of that wave of conquest, the one that rolled over Egypt was the smoothest. Egypt was invaded almost by an accident, by a General's whim, and against the judgment of the Caliph Omar, the supreme head of Islam. So hesitating was the enterprise that it was not thought expedient to send a large force. It is a very common mistake to imagine that all Oriental invasions were composed of vast hordes of people. It was not so even with the later Tatar campaigns, and in the case of Egypt the Arabs marched gaily into the country in December 639 *with four thousand men*—to drive out the Roman legions! The adventure, however, was not so mad as it seemed. The Roman power was far from settled at that time. The Persians had held Egypt for ten years early in the seventh century, and Heraclius had only just recovered it. Moreover, the Egyptians were by no means content with Roman rule, and quite ready for any change. It must be remembered that they had had so many political changes that the ordinary Egyptians scarcely cared who might be master now. But the Church cared very much, and the Church was on the side of the Arabians. In their patriotic hatred of the established Greek Church of Constantinople, the Copts or national Christians of Egypt were ready to help even the Muslims. At their patriarch's bidding they betrayed Pelusium, and after the

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taking of Memphis (or Misr) in the autumn of 640 and the surrender of its Roman fortress of Babylon in the following spring they aided the invaders in every way, with bridge making, transport, and supplies. Thus the conquest became merely a question of driving out an army of occupation with the concurrence of the inhabitants.

The Treaty of Misr was arranged on such liberal terms that any suspicions the people may still have entertained in regard to their conquerors must have been dispelled. The Egyptians were guaranteed the free exercise of their religion, their churches were declared inviolable, and the one important exaction was the payment of a poll-tax by all non-Muslims. Nor was the surrender of Alexandria, the last foothold of the demoralised Romans, attended by acts of violence. We possess a graphic narrative handed down from a soldier in the Saracen army. He tells how, when the troops approached Alexandria, their General received a letter from the Governor (meaning perhaps the Patriarch Cyrus) proposing peace; how the letter was read aloud to the army, and then sent to the Caliph, all the way to Medina, for his instructions; how the troops waited in camp whilst the messenger went and returned the long desert route; and how, when the Caliph's acceptance was announced, 'the whole army shouted, "*Allahu Akbar*" ("God is most great"), 'the loudest Te Deum they had shouted since they entered the land.' In spite of numerous popular stories, there was no siege of Alexandria—merely a tame capitulation. John of Nikiu, a nearly contemporary Christian chronicler, states that there was no pillage or violence. 'Amr levied the tribute, took nothing from the churches, and protected the inhabitants. The well-known legend of the burning of the (already burnt) Alexandrian Library is found in no author earlier than six centuries after the supposed event. It is not mentioned by the contemporary John of Nikiu, nor is it found in the early Arab chroniclers, who had no motive for suppressing it, or in the Greek historians, who would have been glad to record it. It was reserved for a Syrian monk and a Baghdad physician in the thirteenth century to reveal the secret that had lain hidden for six hundred years.

After the capitulation of Alexandria in October 641 the rest of the country submitted without resistance. 'Go forth,' said 'Amr to his little army, 'go forth, now that the season is gracious. When the milk curdles and the leaves wither and the mosquitoes swarm, then come back to your tents.' So they spread over the land in the beautiful Egyptian winter, and the whole country from

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the Red Sea to Libya, and from the mouths of the Nile to the First Cataract, became a province of the Caliphate. Thenceforth no serious invasion[1] troubled Egypt for more than five centuries. Immediately after the conquest 'Amr laid the foundations of a new capital, and his choice of a site was significant. Alexandria, the capital of European emperors, was deposed, and the metropolis was once more established at Memphis. In other words, the Egypt of the Muslims was to face towards Arabia, and no longer towards Europe. The Arabs had not grasped the modern doctrine that Egypt, from a strategic point of view, is an island, and that no power can hold it unless it also commands the sea. At that time the Muslims had a positive horror of the sea, yet they contrived to hold Egypt for nearly nine centuries without ever pretending to more than a tolerable fleet. The one idea of the Caliph 'Omar in regard to Egypt was to keep in touch with the Arab army there. He had no imperial views, and to him Medina was ever the *omphalos* of the world. If the army were posted at Alexandria, it might be cut off from Arabia by the flooded Nile; but with Memphis constant communication by the desert was easy, and the army of Egypt could always be summoned to the aid of the Commander of the Faithful. The site chosen for the new capital was, therefore, just north of the Memphis of that day and close to the Roman fortress of Babylon. The Nile at that time ran under the walls of the fortress, and near here, on the spot where his tent had been pitched during the siege, 'Amr founded the new city of Fustat, or 'the Tent;' built the first mosque in Egypt, which still stands after countless restorations; and put up the simple house in which he dwelt, like the plain soldier he was, and whence he crossed over the road every Friday to lead the prayers of the Faithful. The building of that mosque sealed Egypt for Islam, and the seal has never been broken.

For three hundred and thirty years (641–969) Egypt was a mere province of the Caliphate, like Mesopotamia and Khorasan, and was ruled by one hundred and twenty successive Governors appointed by the Caliphs, first of Damascus, afterwards of Baghdad. For the first two centuries (641–856) these Governors were almost all Arabs, during the third century (856–969) they were nearly all Turks. Of the ninety-four Arab Governors we possess but meagre notices. They were either favourites of the reigning Caliph or chiefs of powerful tribes, and were transferred from one

[1] The Romans, who evacuated Alexandria in September 642, returned in 645, but were quickly driven out by the ever victorious 'Amr.

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province to another before they had time to do much good or mischief. They appear to have possessed no special qualification for their office, and their object, as a rule, was to 'make hay whilst the sun shone,' before a fresh caprice of the Caliph should remove them from power. The conqueror, 'Amr, is said to have left seventy sacks of gold coins, each sack holding ten bushels; and, what is still more astonishing, his virtuous sons are said to have refused to touch this ill-gotten inheritance; but *Allahu 'Alam*—'God knows best!'—as the Arabs say when they delicately hint the lie circumstantial. 'Amr, however, lived to be ninety, and ruled Egypt for ten years. Most of the Governors did not enjoy their power for more than a couple of years, and their opportunities for robbery were of course more limited. They were removed on the smallest whim, and their successors were appointed for the oddest reasons. For example, the 'good' Harun er-Rashid was once offended with the Governor of Egypt, and swore in his royal wrath, 'By Allah, I will replace him by the meanest creature in my court!' Just then his mother's secretary chanced to come into the palace yard, riding on his mule. 'Will you be Governor of Egypt?' asked Jaafar the Barmecide. 'O yes,' said he; and off he went on the mule, just as he was, with a single servant following with his baggage. It was exactly like the good Caliph's practical jokes. Another Governor had a theory that under his rule robbery was inconceivable, and accordingly ordered all the houses, shops, and taverns in the capital to be left open all night. The very bath-keepers were abolished, and bathers were instructed, on laying aside their clothes, merely to invoke the name of the absent but tutelary Governor—'O Abu-Salih, guard my clothes!'—in perfect confidence that nothing would be stolen. The Governors, however, were by no means all fools or knaves. Honesty was rare and public spirit did not exist, but there were men who refused bribes. Once a besieged Governor tried to corrupt the General sent to supersede him by sending to his camp at night a thousand slaves and slave girls, each carrying a thousand pieces of gold in a silken purse; but he sent them all back with the words, 'I would not take your gifts by day, far less by night.' This virtuous General enjoyed a salary of a million and a half a year, and was a learned man, the friend of poets, and introduced—a new variety of melon. Less virtuous rulers were equally distinguished. It is a great mistake to imagine that an indifferent Governor may not be a highly cultivated man—and even an enthusiastic gardener.

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The Caliphs themselves, it should be noted, hardly ever went to Egypt, and seem to have taken no interest in their famous Nile province except for its revenue. When the Omayyad Caliphs of Damascus were overturned by the 'Abbasids the change was scarcely felt in Egypt, and the same officials served the new dynasty with impartial loyalty. Egypt, as usual, did not care. The Caliph Mamun, son of Harun er-Rashid, a highly intellectual man and a student of Greek philosophy, did indeed visit Egypt—to suppress a revolt. The poets had been dinning the praises of the Nile in his ears; but when he looked out from the Dome of the Air, near the present Citadel of Cairo, he was sadly disillusioned. Quoting the words of the Koran, he exclaimed: 'Cursed be Pharaoh for saying, "Am I not King of Egypt?" If only he had seen my Baghdad and its meadows!' No other Caliph took even so much trouble as this.

With such neglect at headquarters and such accidental and ephemeral Governors, one would expect to find the country deplorably governed. But, as a matter of fact, the Arabs made no particular difference. Egypt has always been governed in much the same way from the time of Menes to the time of Ismail. It is only within our own memory that even justice and equal rights have been brought, more or less, to the huts and fields of the fellahin. That the incompetence and corruption of the Muslim Governors did not do more harm was due to the immovable conservatism of the Egyptians and to the adaptability of the Arabs. It is commonly said that Egypt was governed on 'the Arab system,' but the Arabs had no system beyond a few laws of the Koran. The old clan government was totally inapplicable to the civilised town life of Egypt, and Mohammad had not elaborated any polity that could be applied. It should be clearly understood that the Arabs brought almost nothing with them—apart from a creed and a sword—to the lands they conquered. They possessed a singularly small stock-in-trade for the business of empire. Beyond some splendid savage virtues, their one glory was their poetry—a poetry unique in its wild desert breath, and in its exquisite metrical refinement. They had no philosophy, no science, no statecraft, no art to teach the Egyptians, already old in wisdom. The great merit of the Muslims was that they accepted things as they found them, their chief talent lay in their adaptableness. They accepted, and to some extent absorbed, the various civilisations which they subdued, and then they brought these different civilisations into contact by means of a common empire

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and a common language. The Empire of Islam, founded on the Arabic Koran, spread the Arabic language from Samarkand to Cordova—it became the Latin of the East, the language of religion and learning, and the medium of the exchange of ideas between India and Sicily, Persia and Spain. By means of a common creed, a common chief, and, above all, a common literary language, the Arabs in the Middle Ages fulfilled the part which used to be described in antiquity to the now discredited Phœnicians. They were the great intellectual carriers of the Middle Ages, the *commis voyageurs* of science, art, and philosophy. Like the bee, whilst thinking only of their own hive, they unconsciously fertilised the flowers of an intellectual world.

This wise adaptableness of the Saracens was seen the moment they were masters of Egypt. They attempted no 'Arab system,' they introduced no characteristic method of government: they simply sanctioned the system which they found already at work in the country. The division of the administration among provincial and district Governors and heads of villages corresponds closely to the Roman provincial system, and is practically the same which has lasted down to the present century. The taxation was far lighter, however, under the new rulers. According to the papyri recently discovered in Egypt, the Romans exacted at least two-thirds of the produce; whilst the Arabs imposed a land tax of two dinars—that is, about a guinea—per acre, and took another guinea from Christians as the price of a good conscience. Seeing that in the present day, with similar winter crops on a similar soil, an Egyptian acre produces the value of about 7*l.*, one cannot call the land tax heavy. It was enough, however, with the aid of other sources to produce a revenue of from six to seven millions in the middle of the seventh century, and in the eighth the local authorities reported that the treasuries were so full that they could hold no more, and they were ordered to expend this abounding surplus on building mosques. Either these mosques were erected in the sanctuary of the Governor's conscience or they were very badly built, for none of them now exists.

At first, of course, when the Arabs were almost wholly confined to the capital and one or two other large cities, the vast mass of the population consisted of Christians—Copts. They had to pay a guinea a head per annum for their creed, but beyond this they suffered at first no special exactions or disabilities. The Mohammedans, at least in Egypt, are not a persecuting people; and the Copts, then as now, were so necessary in all departments of govern-

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ment for their skill in accounts that the Arabs could not afford to quarrel with them. Moreover, the Copts had materially aided the conquest, and 'Amr had granted special privileges to the national Monophysite church in return for its services. These privileges were afterwards confirmed; but the treatment of the Christians naturally varied with the characters of the officers set over the land by the distant Caliphs. One Governor allowed a church to be built close to the capital; another took up his abode in a monastery and paid 10,000*l.* for it, although, according to Mohammedan law, Egypt as a conquered country was supposed to be confiscate. On the other hand, a third Governor introduced a system of badges, passports, and brands, and monks who were found without these certificates brought trouble on their monasteries.

There is a well-known story of the nun Febronia, one of the religious women who had been dragged out of their convent by Arab soldiers on some such pretext. She was of such surpassing beauty that her captors could not decide who was to own her. Whilst they were consulting she offered to reveal to their leader the secret of an unguent with which her ancestors used to anoint themselves, and thereby became invulnerable. The captain of the troop agreed to let her go back to her convent if she would prove the efficacy of the ointment upon herself. 'So he went with her into the convent, and she approached the picture of the Lady and prayed before it, and begged the Virgin to assist her to obtain deliverance. Then she anointed her neck with the oil, and one of the soldiers drew a sharp sword. The maiden bent her knees and displayed her neck, but they did not know what was in her heart. Then she covered her face and said: "If there is any strong man among you let him strike with his sword on my neck, and he will see the power of God in this great secret." So the man struck with all his might, and her head fell from her body. For it was her purpose to come before Christ a pure virgin, even as she had been created. So when the ignorant soldiers saw what had befallen the maiden, they repented and were exceeding sad, and did no injury thenceforth to these virgins.' But we must not assume an equally heroic spirit in all the Coptic nation, and it is doubtful whether the fact reflects more credit on the Christians of Egypt or on their Arab rulers that nearly a century after the conquest the Mohammedan religion had made so little progress among the natives that in 732 the Governor imported a whole Arab tribe of the Beni Keys, 5,000 in number, and settled

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them in the Delta. Many other tribes came later, and as most new Governors were escorted by an army, sometimes to the number of 20,000 Muslims, there must have been a growing Mohammedan population. Intermarriage with Christian women had taken place since the conquest—when the maidens of Salteys were very amiable to the Arab warriors—and no doubt increased until the population gradually acquired the mixed character which we now see in the modern Egyptians.

The Governors of the Caliphs had really far more trouble with people of their own creed than with the Copts. The various sects of Islam—the Puritans (or Kharijis), the Divine Right men (Alids), and the various races, the Arabs of the Delta, the Berbers of Libya, caused frequent disturbances. The Copts unfortunately joined in when there was a revolt on foot, and of course paid the penalty. But after the stern repression of a serious rising in 832 by the Caliph Mamun in person we hear of no more Christian rebellions, and Egypt became the predominantly Muslim country she has ever since remained. Undoubtedly there was occasional persecution, and not of Christians alone. Muslims who held unorthodox views about the createdness of the Koran—a burning question in the ninth century—were publicly flogged, and judges were shorn of their beards. A suspicious slip in reading the Koran in the mosque was corrected with the scourge in the interests of orthodox elocution. In the same petty spirit Christians were compelled to wear clothes of a peculiar honey colour, to ride with wooden stirrups, and the men had to wear the woman's girdle, whilst images of apes and dogs and devils were set up over Christian doors. But these were exceptional follies, and in the early days the lot of the Christians was scarcely less prosperous than that of their Muslim neighbours. Indeed, in one respect they were better off, for the payment of the poll-tax exempted them from military service. But during the period of Arab Governors there was only one regular campaigning ground, and that was, as now, the Sudan. It had been invaded immediately after the conquest of Egypt in 642, and the blacks had astonished the Arabs by their deadly bowmanship. Ten years later, in a second campaign, the invaders had been more successful: they took Dongola, destroyed the Coptic church, and built a mosque. At the same time an annual tribute was exacted from the King of the Sudan, consisting of 360 slaves, and this human tribute remained in force for at least six centuries and kept up the supply of the famous black regiments of Egypt down

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to the time of the crusade of St. Louis. The last Egyptian Governor of Arab blood led 7,000 troops into the Sudan in 852 in order to exact this tribute. The king, who was called Ali Baba, found that his naked warriors with their unmanageable camels were no match for Arabs in armour and on horseback, well supplied by ships at the mediæval Red Sea port of 'Aydhab, and accordingly came to terms. The curious spectacle was seen of the black Christian king of the Sudan being honourably entertained, not only at Fustat, but by the Caliph himself at Baghdad, and then safely escorted back to his own kingdom. It was as though the Mahdi had come to visit Lord Cromer and gone on to Windsor.

This Sudan campaign was the last exploit of the Arab Governors of Egypt. By the middle of the ninth century the rule of the Arab was nearly over and the rule of the Turk had begun. When the word 'Turk' is mentioned, most people naturally think of the nearest variety, the Ottoman Turk of Europe. At his best, the Othmanli Turk, whether as soldier, statesman, or mere gentleman, is a splendid type; but *vixerunt fortes ante Agamemnona*, and there were great Turks long before the Ottomans. Mahmud of Ghazni, the first Mohammedan conqueror of Hindustan and the centre of an 'assemblage of literary genius,' the focus of the science, art, and letters of his world, was a Turk. Melik Shah, one of the best and wisest of kings, whose dominions stretched from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean, and a solitary traveller might journey from end to end of them in perfect security; Nur-ed-din, the just, admired by William of Tyre; Babar, that fascinating compound of hero, poet, and rake; Akbar, the greatest character that has ever shone upon an Eastern throne—all these were Turks. The Turks were the real saviours of orthodox Islam. When the Arabs and Persians were splitting hairs and blending mysticism and rationalism in various fanciful ways, these nomads of the steppes came in with their simple faith, took the sceptre from the nerveless hands of the Caliphs and the greedy clutch of the Arabs, revived the zeal and martial vigour of primitive Islam, and roused the slumbering forces of the faith to do battle with the Cross. We may think that a doubtful service, but at least there is nothing doubtful in this remarkable fact—that wherever you find the Turks in power in the Middle Ages, there you also find literature and art flourishing in extraordinary perfection. The Turks themselves have done little, compared with others, in either branch; but their rule, so long as it was strong,

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undoubtedly fostered learning and taste. The Mamluks of Egypt were many of them unmitigated scoundrels, but art and letters were never more ardently pursued than in their time.

And it is only with the arrival of Turkish Governors in the middle of the ninth century that architecture can be said to have begun, in Muslim Egypt, with the mosque of Ibn-Tulun. This remarkable man's father was a slave from Bukhara in the body-guard of the Caliph of Baghdad. It was the way most Governors began. The Caliphs had discovered that Turkish slaves were better servants, braver soldiers, and honester Governors than the fickle, jealous, and intriguing Arab, and the statesmanlike qualities of the Turkish slaves soon gave them the command of the empire. They took pains to prepare themselves for power. Ibn-Tulun was a highly educated and even learned man, as well as a trained soldier. He not only studied in the great colleges at Baghdad, but journeyed to Tarsus to attend the lectures of eminent professors. He became a critic and a theologian. When he was made Governor of Egypt, in 868, he had to borrow money for his expenses; but his ability soon brought him wealth and practically independent power. He kept 12,000 black troops from the Sudan; his house was open to all, and he spent 500*l.* a day on his table. He was the first of the Caliphs' Governors to revive the separate glory of Egypt and beautify her capital. In his new royal suburb of el-Katai, or 'the Wards,' between Fustat and the future Cairo, he erected a palace, made separate wards or quarters for the different races and classes of his servants and troops, and built the famous mosque, which remains to this day a lasting monument to his taste and his munificence. It does not matter where he got his ideas, or how large a share a Coptic architect and Byzantine models had in the design and decorations. The main point is that under this brilliant Turk the first superb monument of Saracenic art was built in Egypt—a monument unsurpassed in its large and simple ornament, and unprecedented in its employment of the pointed or Gothic arch. The pointed arch also occurs in the Nilometer on the island of Roda, close by, which is a few years earlier; but the mosque of Ibn-Tulun stands in the history of architecture as the first example of the general adoption of the pointed arch throughout a building.

Ibn-Tulun was very sensitive to criticism of his public works. He had built an aqueduct to bring water from the southern desert to Cairo, and it was said that the water was unwholesome. Even in those days there was a sanitary 'fad,' it seems. One night the

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celebrated doctor Mohammad Ibn-'Abd-el-Hakam was in his house—he tells the story himself—when a 'slave of Ibn-Tulun's came and said, "The Emir wants thee." I mounted my horse in a panic of alarm, and the slave led me off the high road. "Where are you taking me?" I asked. "To the desert," he said, "the Emir is there." Convinced that my last hour was come, I said, "God help me, I am an aged and feeble man. Do you know what he wants with me?" The slave took pity on my anxiety, and said, "Be careful not to speak disrespectfully of the aqueduct." We went on and on, until suddenly I saw torch-bearers in the desert and Ibn-Tulun himself on horseback at the gate of the aqueduct, with great wax candles burning in front of him. I immediately dismounted and salaamed; but he gave me no greeting in return. Then I said, "O Emir, thy messenger hath grievously fatigued me, and I thirst. Let me, I beg, take a drink." The pages offered me water, but I said: "No, I will draw for myself." I drew water, while he looked on, and I drank, and drank, until I thought I should burst. At last I said, "O Emir, God quench thy thirst at the rivers of Paradise! I have drunk my fill, and I know not which to praise most—the excellence of this cool, sweet, clear water, or the delicious smell of the aqueduct." "Let him retire," said Ibn-Tulun.' The prudent courtier had saved his neck. The severity implied in this anecdote is borne out by the statement that during the reign of Ibn-Tulun 18,000 persons were executed or died in prison. After which we are informed that he knew the Koran by heart, and recited it in a sweet voice. Piously severe, he studied the needs of the country, reduced the taxation, improved the irrigation, and encouraged the cultivators by the order and security insured by his firm rule. When he died he left five millions in the treasury, an army of over 35,000 slave troops—far superior to free soldiers—and a hundred ships of war. His son, Khumaraweyh, carried on his policy and excelled him in sumptuous magnificence. He commanded an army of 70,000 men, and was practically a sovereign ruler from Barka to the Euphrates. He married his daughter 'Dew-drop,' to the Caliph, and the trousseau cost him half a million. His kitchen disposed of 12,000*l.* a month. He also was a great builder, and laid out gardens of rare and sweet-smelling flowers, planted in the form of verses of poetry, which you could read; he covered what he thought the unsightly trunks of the trees with gold plates; and in the midst of the grounds he set a quicksilver lake, on which his bed floated tied by silken cords to silver posts, whilst a tame

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lion guarded his slumbers. This was his doctor's prescription for insomnia.

This passing of power from father to son was a new thing in Muslim Egypt. Ibn-Tulun had founded a dynasty, independent in all but name. It died out, after thirty-seven years, in his feeble posterity; but it was a sign of the times. Soon afterwards another strong Turk, the Ikhshid, a descendant of the royal family of Ferghana beside the Jaxartes, followed Ibn-Tulun's example, and extorted from the Caliph a thirty years' grant of the government of Egypt, with remainder to his heirs. His dynasty also broke down through the incapacity of his sons, though nominally sustained on the throne by the ability of the real ruler, the vezir Abu-l-Misk Kafur, or 'Musky Camphor.' This Sudani slave, with his shining black skin and jolly laugh, was at once the Lucullus and Mæcenas of his age. He picked up some culture from his masters, like most clever slaves, and loved to surround himself with poets and learned men; and, with a nigger's love of music, he always had singers and musicians at his court. His cook was daily supplied with 100 sheep, 100 lambs, 250 geese, 500 fowls, 1,000 pigeons and birds, and 100 jars of sweetmeats; and his favourite drink was quince cider. He was the first black that governed Egypt since the conquest, and he was the last Governor in the name of the orthodox Caliph of Baghdad until Saladin came two centuries later to restore their spiritual authority.

Orthodox, Sunni, Egypt ended with Kafur in 969. Looking back over the three centuries that had passed since the Saracens invaded the valley of the Nile, we are chiefly struck by the docility of the Egyptians and the lack of originality of the Arabs. We see the mass of the people slowly but permanently adopting the faith and the language of their new rulers. We see these rulers adopting the ancient methods of government which they found in the land. We see conquerors and conquered gradually blending—not without some struggles and intolerance, but still blending—into the mixed race that we call the modern Egyptians.

But so far the mixture had produced no strikingly conspicuous men. The few commanding figures among the Governors were foreigners, and even these were but a step above the ordinary official. They essayed no great extension of their dominions; they took no precautions against the coming invasion from the west; and though they possessed fleets and employed them along the coasts, they ventured upon no voyage of discovery or plunder,

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and made no descents upon the shores of Europe. In material conditions it may be doubted whether the people gained much by the Arab conquest. They had merely exchanged one foreign rule for another. The Arab ruler was no more bigoted and possibly less corrupt than the Byzantine, and his taxes were simpler and less burdensome. The usual irrigation, seed time and harvest, pursued their immemorial course; but agriculture owed little to the Governors since the time when 'Amr the Conqueror re-opened the old canal known as the Amnis Trajanus and kept 120,000 labourers employed on corvée at the dikes. The luxury of the capital benefited the townspeople for a time at the cost of the fellahin, and the Courts of men like Ibn-Tulun and Kafur attracted men of letters from other parts of the caliphate. But, so far the Muslims of Egypt had not produced a poet, an historian, or a scholar of the first rank in Arabic literature, and the learned of Egypt stood far behind their contemporaries at Cordova, Baghdad, or Damascus. This was no doubt partly due to the unsettled mind caused by frequent changes. Egypt has always suffered from the confusion produced by putting new wine in old bottles. A new creed had hardly time to fight it out with the old before a third came to join in the fray. During the first three centuries orthodox Islam is seen gradually imposing itself upon a Christian population, until most of the Egyptians had become orthodox Muslims. Then suddenly we shall find an heretical caliphate—the famous Fatimid dynasty of the Shia—on the throne for two centuries, during which Egypt changed her official faith with perfect tranquillity, only to revert to the old creed with equal calm in the twelfth century, when Saladin founded his empire on rigid orthodoxy and the zeal of the Holy War.

STANLEY LANE-POOLE.

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Ad Sodalem,

Cujus octavum trepidavit ætas
Claudere lustrum.

CONSULE PLANCO! We were young
When Plancus filled the curule chair,
Or—done into the vulgar tongue—
When Walker was Lord Mayor.

The days were longer then, I trow;
The nights were shorter, that I'll swear,
The Future was a shining row
Of Castles in the Air.

We chased the hours with flying feet,
We loved the 'round,' we scorned the 'square,'
And even found it passing sweet
To sit upon the stair.

It hath been said, or rather, sung,
'Behind the horseman sits Black Care;'
'Tis true; but when the rider's young,
He does not know 'tis there.

Yet if we reckon gain and loss,
If Past with Present we compare,
Although the gold has lost its gloss,
Is not the balance fair?

We could not button now—I grant—
The waistcoats that we used to wear,
But compensation comes—we want
Less time to brush our hair.

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We scarce could tell, when we were boys,
  Château Lafitte from 'ordinaire,'
We had not learned what subtle joys
  Lurk in a vintage rare.

The lamp a clearer light may pour,
  Now that the wick has ceased to flare;
Life has some pleasures yet in store
  And we will take our share.

FRANK RITCHIE.

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The Real Rose.

LET me hasten to say that no insinuation is thrown out that anything in the nature of a counterfeit of our national flower is being generally produced; but what is suggested, very strongly and emphatically, is that the rose as it is seen in the majority of gardens is a very different thing from the rose as it should be, the rose as it *is*. That this should be the case is to some extent remarkable. When a man settles down in a house of his own with a plot of land about it, whatever may have been his bachelor contempt of the pettifogging gardener, he usually develops some interest in the production of flowers, and acquires a corresponding knowledge of the general principles of horticulture. But from this interest and from this knowledge the rose is almost invariably excluded—the rose, which is the queen of flowers and the national flower and, beyond all dispute, the most beautiful flower that grows. No one, not the most hardened and soulless Stoic, could be confronted, say, with one of Mr. Prince's *Comtesse de Nadaillacs*, or with a *Mrs. W. J. Grant*, or with a *Kaiserin Augusta Victoria* at its serenest, and deny that it was a thing of beauty. It has been truly said that there is only one more lovely thing in creation than a beautiful rose, and that is a beautiful woman. The married man, having presumably permitted himself sufficient opportunity to test his æsthetic appreciation of the latter, might reasonably have been expected to devote some attention to the less perfect of Nature's two masterpieces. But he prefers, as a rule, to pay his homage to inferior and vastly more troublesome beauties. The rose is treated as an ordinary flowering shrub and left to do as it lists, while he pricks and potters among his stocks and his wallflowers and his cabbages and his chrysanthemums—the complete outfit, in short, of the suburban garden. The case of the chrysanthemum grower is the most difficult to understand. You have a man, who leaves his roses crying out for a comparatively trifling amount of

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attention, mixing his soils, potting and repotting, snipping and disbudding and fiddling, expending hours upon hours of hardly spared time, and all to produce in the end a flower which, at its very best, can no more stand beside a good rose than a sparrow by a peacock. The floral sovereign, in the meantime, being left to itself, produces a great quantity of superfluous wood and an astonishing number of insignificant blooms in clusters—flowers which are very well in their way, and, so long as they develop no worse fault than mere diminutiveness, not ineffective in the distance, but quite incapable of comparison with the same variety when properly grown.

The reason for this neglect of the rose, it seems to me, is frequently attributable to the fact that a man's original stock is not procured on his own initiative, and he thereby loses that sense of parentage which he feels in regard to other flowers. When he takes a house he finds, among the other contents of the garden, an assortment of rose plants of a more or less antiquated and uneven appearance. These become year by year more bushy and cumbersome, and the blooms they bear more minute and clustery, until at length he gets impressed with the idea that they are something quite distinct—not merely different varieties, but a different family altogether—from those which produce the specimens he sees in the florists' windows or the buttonhole of some enthusiastic grower. These, he imagines, are obtained from plants of some special and peculiar kind, requiring some special and peculiar treatment, which he has neither the time nor the inclination to give. It is a most mistaken impression. The contract nurseryman's 'little lot' per quarter acre plot commonly includes such varieties as *Marchioness of Londonderry*, *Margaret Dickson*, *General Jacqueminot*, and *La France*, all roses of the highest rank, which are successfully exhibited at the present day. As for the supposition that the rose demands a high order of technical knowledge for its successful cultivation, there is probably no flower which requires so small an expenditure of trouble and skill in proportion to the results obtained. After spending more years than I need enumerate in close association with the queen of flowers, I have come to the conclusion that the difference between shabby clusters and good blooms rests mainly upon two points. There are many others which can be observed with benefit, and must be observed if exceptional flowers are desired, but only two which are absolutely necessary to success. You can leave the trees unmanured, you

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can cut their sun to a few hours a day, you can let your bulbs or what-not remain among the plants, you can take no notice of blight and grub and mildew—all things which are better attended to, but are not essential—but you *must* prune properly and you *must* disbud. So important are these two points that it is almost possible to draw a rigid line dividing the roses of amateurs into two classes—those which are properly pruned and disbudded, and those which are not pruned, or absurdly pruned, and not disbudded.

By proper pruning is meant cutting down the healthy shoots of the previous year to five or six eyes, and cutting all the weak and dead and very old wood right out. Some people object to cut their plants low, on the ground that it diminishes the foliage, or is contrary to nature, or for some other reason equally trivial. If we left nature to do its work in precisely its own way, our gardens would soon become hopeless tangles; while, as for the foliage, you would get abundance if you cut to the crowns. Disbudding, in the limited sense in which I have used the term, means merely removing the numerous small buds which usually surround the central calyx, as soon as they appear. Nothing is lost by doing so. If the large flower is eventually cut, the small buds are necessarily taken with it; and if it is allowed to remain upon the tree, they come at best to a crabbed maturity beneath its fading petals. The very general neglect of an operation so trifling and so important as this is difficult to understand. No chrysanthemum grower, however small his stock and lukewarm his interest, would think of failing to disbud. The habit once acquired, it becomes a mechanical process almost unconsciously performed, and must not be confused with the far more drastic measures of the exhibitor, who removes not only his buds but all his more weakly shoots in order to throw adventitious strength into a few especially vigorous ones—a practice which is quite unnecessary for the purposes of the ordinary grower.

By attending to the two points above noted the amateur may obtain very good results even with the stock which may happen to be already in his garden—results, at any rate, far surpassing any which he will have been in the habit of securing if he has given his plants no attention at all—and we should see fewer of the perfectly lamentable questions which sometimes appear in the gardening papers, such as, 'What is best to do for green centres?' When a man has sunk so low as to get green centres in his roses, he had better make up his mind to relinquish the

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attempt to grow them. To revert to our hypothetical gentleman's original stock, he will probably find that a small minority of his trees have produced no vigorous wood that he can deal with, because their position fails to fulfil an essential condition. When selecting a place for roses, the most important consideration to be held in view is to give them adequate shelter; it is more important than sun, more important than soil. Roses will grow with any aspect except due north, where nothing will grow; they will grow in heavy clay or light gravel, but they will *not* grow in a through draught. Some people put a rose in a windy corner that would kill a cabbage, and then blame it for a delicate weakling because it refuses to flourish. In truth, it is not a delicate plant. If your climate is reasonably genial—that is, if you live anywhere in the south, west, or midlands—and have a quiet corner in your garden, you can grow any variety in the nurserymen's catalogues, even the most tender; while the vast majority of the hybrid perpetuals, and even some with a tea strain, can be successfully cultivated in any part of Great Britain. Nor is it the case, as many suppose, that the best roses can only be produced upon standards. The latter stock is useful to place at the back of a border, or for other similar decorative purposes, but the highest quality of individual blooms is, beyond question, obtained upon dwarfs. When a man grows for exhibition, it is quite likely you will not find a standard in his garden.

The high level which rose culture has attained in England is probably not realised by many people. They should make time to visit the National Show, held on the first Saturday in every July at the Crystal Palace. The magnificent display of peerless blooms there to be seen will amply compensate for the short train journey. Albeit, the exhibition rose is to some extent an artificial production, obtained by drastic disbudding, by the use of highly concentrated manures, and by dressing the blooms—not that the latter practice reaches a degree at all approaching that which prevails in the exhibition of some other flowers, notably chrysanthemums. It cannot, therefore, strictly be called the real rose with any more justice than the product of an uncared for bush. But the difference between an ordinary good bloom and one of exhibition standard is far less than that between the flowers of a plant left to itself and of one sufficiently nurtured. Any man with a plot of land behind his house and without any special horticultural knowledge can, by the expenditure of an

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altogether insignificant amount of trouble, obtain specimens of the queen of flowers which will completely satisfy the æsthetic eye, and not improbably arouse the emulation of his neighbours. The rose is full of gratitude. No human mistress could repay a little care and a little thought and a little love more abundantly.

WILLIAM PIGOTT.

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His Uncle Dan.

THE summer after our very trying experiences at Sandyport—where most of our month's holiday was spent in turning away from the cottage we had rented all the other families to whom Mr. Joseph Scorer had also let it—my wife insisted on trying the east coast. You see, she comes from the north herself, and she had, I think, an idea that as East Anglia lay nearer her native land than Sussex or Wessex, the inhabitants would be more likely to be imbued with, or at all events to some extent tinctured with, some of the more prominent virtues, including that of honesty, than she had found the Southrons. These latter she considered spoiled by the annual inrush of Londoners all in a heap in August, which made the natives masters of the situation, and gave them opportunities for haymaking of which it was altogether too much to expect human nature not to take advantage.

We fixed on Felixstowe as our headquarters, and with our last year's experiences still very fresh in our minds we naturally reverted to lodgings. If they were not absolutely everything that could be desired—are such to be found this side Heaven?—we could at all events leave them for a whole day at a time without the certainty of finding a furious father and an anxious mother and a brood of distressful children clamouring for possession when we returned.

And if the Felixstowe beach did not fully answer the family requirements in the matter of sand and pools, there were compensations to be found elsewhere.

On the low-lying sandy spit near the old fort was a soldiers' camp, with drilling ground and shooting-ranges, and in these things my youngsters took the keenest interest and delight. They lay by the hour in the wire-grass and watched the shooting, and wandered over the butts when it was over and dug up treasure trove in the shape of long metal Lee-Metford cartridge cases, and conical bullets which had wandered wide among the sandhills.

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We bequeathed nearly a cartload of such spoil to our landlady when we went home, much to her surprise and disgust. They were never tired of lingering through the canvas streets of the camp, the houses of which bore fanciful legends in uncouth charcoal characters, the marks at once of burnt stick and a pointed, if none too polished, wit, and possibly of something of a retaliatory spirit. The 'Home for Lost Dogs' struck us as hardly likely to have been so labelled by its inhabitants, but as being more probably a reply in kind from the occupants of the 'Rat Pit' next door, or possibly a *tu quoque* from the 'Flea Trap,' or 'Monkey House,' or 'Cockytoo Lodge,' or the 'Mongrel's Parlour,' all of which were adjacent, or possibly it was the tangible evidence of a midnight raid by the 'Laughing Jackasses' at the other end of the camp.

Our young folks haunted the camp, and came to know it in all—well, say in most of—its phases. They watched it work and they watched it play—at cards and draughts and dominoes, at football, cricket, and quoits. They criticised its cooking arrangements, and its various methods of devouring its food, which, I am bound to say, tended rather towards business-like despatch than towards elegance of manners. They watched it receive its letters and retire into corners to read them, and lie flat on its stomach to write its replies with much arduous toil of hand and tongue. They heard it sing and laugh and grumble. They saw it receive its modest pay, and then creep, dingy and grubby, into its triangular darknesses, whence, after a brief period of retirement, it emerged radiant in butterfly scarlet, with shining face, and plastered hair ornamented with precariously clinging cap, and then, with diminutive cane twirling jauntily, they saw it strut proudly away to the town on conquest bent.

Both my boys were going to be soldiers the moment they were big enough. Both my girls were going to marry soldiers as soon as they grew up. I felt it my duty to beg them to become, and to choose, officers, and my mind was relieved when they stated that such of course was their intention.

But one morning there sprang up on a vacant plot among the sand hummocks between the camp and the town, a sudden mushroom growth of white bell tents arranged in symmetrical lines around the four sides of a long parallelogram, with large square mess tents at each end, and cooking ovens dug out of the sandhills beyond the lines. The work was executed in business-like fashion by soldierly men of graver aspect and more sober mien than

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the light-hearted irresponsibles of the 'Rat Trap' and the 'Home for Lost Dogs' beyond, some of whom strolled down to offer suggestions, which were received with a chilling lack of attention.

Presently, with shrill squeak of many fifes and much rattle of kettledrums, there marched in from the station a regiment of boy soldiers, the eldest I should say not more than fifteen, but every man of them bearing himself with all the conscious pride of a bemedalled veteran of fifty.

Thenceforth the 'Rat Trap' and the 'Mongrel's Parlour' and the home of the 'Laughing Jackasses' knew us no more. All our attention was centred on the youthful warriors of the new camp, and we soon came to know them in the lump as well as we had known their elders farther along the shore.

But even warriors, in the lump, are not as interesting as individuals; and as we became familiar with the machinery of the camp, our chief enjoyment began to revolve round one particular little unit thereof.

We had each of us separately been struck by him as they marched in that first day, and this alone sufficed to give him a place apart from his fellows in all our minds. He was the brightest-faced youngster in the regiment—brown hair, pert nose, quick blue eyes which roved around in vast enjoyment of the sensation he was helping to create, perfect health and rollicking humour in every curve of his impudent little face.

He was one of the kettledrums, and the way his sticks flashed and twirled was a sight and a source of amazement to all beholders. His very soul seemed to run down into the points of those twinkling sticks, and his boyish delight in the noise he could extract from his drum was barely veiled beneath the gravity he considered becoming to a man of his position.

We were constantly meeting him strolling out with the other men of his corps, and he always seemed to be doing the talking and gesticulating for the lot. A chance conversation which we overheard as we came along the soft sand to the camp one afternoon enlightened us as to his name and some of his characteristics.

Four of them were lying in a sunny nook, and they were quite too much interested in themselves to pay any attention to us. We were interested too, and we trod soft and went slow for the purpose of hearing the end of their discussion, but they took no notice of us.

'When my Uncle Dan was at Watterloo——' were the first words that reached us from our little kettledrum.

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'Garn, Danny Rendle! Give yer Uncle Dan a rest. I don't b'lieve y' ain't got no Uncle Dan,' growled a dark-haired boy.

'You—don't—b'lieve—I—ain't—got—no—Uncle—Dan,—Jim Foley?' exclaimed our youngster, in a tone of the most concentrated amazement.

'Nar,' said the other. 'If yer have, why don't he never come t' see yer? Why don't he never send yer nuff'n? I never seen him, nor ever heard tell of anybody that has, an' yer never gits any letters from 'm, not so much as a ha'p'ny post card.'

'He can't write, 'cos he lost his arm at Watterloo.'

'Yah! He c'd write wiv his other arm, or wiv his toes, same as yon man at the show we was at, or he c'd get summun else t' write; or he c'd come an' see yer.'

'Lost both his legs at Watterloo.'

'Huh! *an'* his head, *an'* his tail. Not much left of him to brag about. But I don't b'lieve there ain't no such person.'

'All right, Jim Foley! You see that there sandhill?'

'I see it. Wot's that got t' do wiv yer Uncle Dan? Is the scraps of him buried there?'

'You git out to-night, Jim Foley, and come down there, an' I'll interdooce yer to my Uncle Dan.'

'Will? Right! I'm on. I'd like to meet all that's left of the old gen'leman.'

And then we had to pass out of hearing, having learned that our youngster's name was Dan Rendle, and that he had, or said he had, a veteran uncle upon whose existence his companions cast doubts.

Without saying anything to my young people, I promised myself the pleasure of witnessing the introduction of Jim Foley to little Dan's aged relative.

And I was there, ambushed flat in the wire-grass of a neighbouring hillock for an hour before the meeting, and counted the time well spent.

Dan was first on the field with two supporters. Presently Jim Foley strolled up with three more.

'Ah, you there, Danny Rendle? Now, where's yer Uncle Dan wot lost his arms and his legs at Watterloo, *an'* his head, *an'* his tail, *an'* every blim bit of him? I—don't—b'lieve—you—got—no—Uncle—Dan.'

'Come on!' said Dan, and peeled off his tunic, and rolled up the sleeves of his little coloured shirt, and tied his red cotton handkerchief tight round his waist, 'an' I'll interdooce yer to him.'

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I am not going to describe the fight. I am old-fashioned—or maybe it is new-fashioned—enough to believe that a fight is less demoralising to the principals, except, indeed, in such trifling matters as blood and cuticle, than to the onlookers.

So, briefly, the conflict waxed and waned for a good ten minutes. Jim was half a head the taller, but was not so close-knit and active as Danny, and Danny was fired with the defence of the family honour. In the event Jim measured his length on the earth, and before he could rise, Danny had him by the scruff of the neck and was ramming his face into the sand, while he pantingly exhorted him to a better frame of mind in the matter of Uncle Dan.

'Now,—(ram)—Jim Foley,—(ram)—d' you b'lieve—(ram)—in my Uncle Dan?'

'NO!' roared Jim, spitting out a mouthful of sand as his head rose. 'You—ain't—got—no—Uncle—Dan.'

'Then, dan you! I'll choke you!' and down went Jim's face into the sand once more, and was held there so long that I began to fear the threat would be carried out.

The others began to fear so too.

'Let him be, Dan Rendle,' said one. 'We all know you got an Uncle Dan, an' what's it matter 'bout him?'

'Ho! do—do you?' panted Dan.

'No—he ain't,' came in a muffled whisper from the sand.

'Well, I guess you've had 'nough of him for one day, Jim Foley,' said the victor, giving the fallen foe a final shake.

'Don't want never—t' hear his name again,' said Jim, sitting up slowly, and scooping the sand out of his mouth with his finger.

'All right,' said Dan, letting down his sleeves, and getting into his tunic, 'when you want to hear from him again, you let me know, an' I'll 'tend to it. He told me to lick yer, an' I done it,' and he marched away with his head in the air.

Next day, as we drew near the camp, the shouts and laughter from the beach just beyond told us that the youthful warriors were at their ablutions, so we sat down to watch their antics.

They were having a right merry time, gambolling in the surf like a school of stranded porpoises, rolling, yelling, chasing one another with bunches of seaweed, while the more courageous ventured out up to their chins, and essayed the voyage home.

A short-cut shout that was different from the other shouts—as different as death is from life—and all the other shouts died away, and all our eyes turned to where a pair of white arms were

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thrashing wildly at the water which closed over them—another bubbling cry as they came in sight again.

I had kicked off my shoes and shed my jacket for a desperate venture, with little hope of success, for he was a long way out. The sergeant in charge was wading out up to his knees, cursing volubly—I learned afterwards that he couldn't swim a stroke. All the other youngsters had scuttled ashore and formed a shivering fringe to the lip of the tide.

Suddenly shouts broke out from the squirming line.

'Go it, Danny! You got him. Keep up, old man. 'Ray! he's got him. Danny's got him. Good ole Dan! Right and tight, here they come,' and presently they were in shallow water, and stood for breath, Dan with his arm round the other, supporting him, for he was spent; and then they waded ashore amid the shouts of the boys, and I saw that the other was Jim Foley, the unbeliever.

And as they came slowly through the shallows I heard—

'Didn't want you to drown 'fore you'd seen my Uncle Dan, Jim Foley.'

'Y' ain't—got no—Uncle Dan, Danny Rendle,' dribbled sturdily from blue-lipped Jim.

''Twere him sent me after you,' said Dan.

'Garn!' said Jim, and then the sergeant took them in custody.

Now it seemed to me that this conduct of little Dan's deserved more recognition than it was like to get, and, thinking the matter over, I decided on a course which would, I had reason to believe, give Dan more satisfaction than anything else was likely to do.

I let two days elapse, and then, seeing Dan sitting outside his tent with a circle of admirers round him, and the recovered Jim playing devil's chorus at the door of his own tent, I walked in past the sentries with my youngsters, and requested audience of the Commander-in-Chief.

That high official was absent on pleasure, but I was introduced to a sergeant, who happened to be the one who got his trousers wet on the beach the other day.

'Have you got a boy here named Rendle, sergeant—Dan Rendle?' I asked.

'We have, sir. Do you know him?'

'Well, I know something about him. His Uncle Dan——'

'Ay, ay, sir; that's him. There he is, 'mong all them byes. He's the cheeky-looking young limb in the middle that's doing all the talking; but he's a good bye, and a plucky one. I'll call him.'

'No, if you don't mind, we'd like to go to him.'

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'Right, sir,' and he led us across the vacant space to where Danny was holding court.

'Rendle, here's a gentleman come to see you from your Uncle Dan,' said the sergeant, and Danny sprang up to the salute with a face like a red rose dusted with gold, for it gleamed all over—and tipped with dew, for his eyes sparkled like diamonds—wet diamonds.

'Well, Dan, my boy,' I said, 'how are you, and how are you getting on? Heard from Uncle Dan lately?'

'No, sir, I ain't,' said Dan, with something of a dazed look in his eyes.

'Ah, he's not much of a writer, is he, with his one arm?'

'No, sir, he ain't.'

And after a pause, 'Is he—is he all right, sir?'

'All right last time I heard from him, Dan. I suppose we may sit down?'

'Surely, sir,' said the sergeant, who was hovering around. 'Now, you byes, skedaddle. Like your imperence, hangin' round with your mouths wide open when Rendle has visitors from his Uncle Dan.'

'Well, and have they made you sergeant yet, Dan, or corporal, or what?'

'No, sir, I ain't noth'n but just full private. But I've got two good-conduct stripes, an'—an' they say I'm t' have a medal.'

'Oh, and what's the medal for? Shooting?'

'No, sir, fur—fur swimmin',' said Dan modestly.

'For savin' a bye's life at sea at risk of his own,' said the sergeant, who was still within earshot.

'Oh! how was that? That's a great thing to have done, my boy, and a thing to be proud of. It's not everybody gets the chance, or has the pluck to take advantage of it.'

It was the sergeant, however, who told us the story, and pointed out Jim Foley, still sitting in the door of his tent and straining eyes and ears our way, as the 'fullish bye what didn't know enough to keep inside his depth, and spiled me a pair o' new trousers, he did too, forbye, wi' his fullishness.'

We stopped chatting with Dan for close on half an hour. He told us all that he knew, and a great deal that he thought, about a sham fight with the soldiers in the other camp that was to come off in the marshes that night, and strongly advised us to be present. It was to be a slap-up, real banging affair, and wouldn't they just make a noise! He showed us inside his tent, which he

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shared with five others, and all his belongings, and led us past Jim Foley, with his nose up and his head in the air, to the mess tent; and finally, after we had taken leave of the sergeant, and begged his acceptance of half-a-crown, he conducted us proudly past the sentries and said good-bye, and stood looking after us, with his right hand firmly clasped on a five-shilling piece, and an expression of face that was strangely compounded of gratitude and mystification.

When we strolled up to camp next day Dan was on sentry duty at the front entrance. There were a score of the town boys regarding him enviously, and he would not permit himself so much as the flicker of an eyelid from the straight path of duty. His eyes shone on us like blue diamonds, and I got a fleeting impression of a slight tremor of the under part of the left eye-cup; but the little warrior sternly nipped the flower of friendship in the bud, and remained as immobile as if he had swallowed the barrel of his musket and had been cast in gun-metal.

The next day we begged leave for him for the afternoon, and carried him off in a carriage and pair for a drive round the country-side, and home to our lodgings to tea, and we all delighted in him greatly. My youngest boy desired forthwith to be put into a soldier's orphanage, that he might begin to emulate the deeds of Danny the Great, and his mother had to be at much pains to explain to him that on several counts he was not at present eligible.

Dan chattered away most entertainingly of his soldiering experiences, asserted that they had licked the big fellows all to fits in the marshes the other night, and dilated at considerable length on the great time they had had at the canteen, when he had had his Uncle Dan's health drunk with full honours in forty bottles of ginger beer. 'But I ain't spent all the money yet,' he said, with a deprecatory glance at me.

But when I hinted that money was meant to be spent, and was apt to burn holes in boys' pockets if kept too long—a proposition which made my own youngsters prick up their ears—and endeavoured to draw him on the use to which the balance was to be put, he rapidly changed the subject, and I forbore to worry him.

I was very curious to know if my own surmises as to Dan's Uncle Dan were anywhere near the mark, and when my wife was putting the younger children to bed I told the others to run down to the beach while Dan and I had a talk.

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'Now, Danny, my man, tell me about your Uncle Dan,' I began when we were alone. 'Where does he live?'

He looked at me very straight for the space of a minute, as though debating in his own mind whether to unload himself or not, and then said briefly:

'I ain't got no Uncle Dan.'

It was so exactly what I expected that, after all that had passed, I could not refrain from a shout of laughter, at which he knitted his brows and blinked quickly, and I saw that I had hurt him. I stretched out my hand.

'You must excuse me, old man,' I said, 'but that was exactly what I imagined,' at which a look of relief came over his face. 'And yet you fought Jim Foley because he cast doubts on Uncle Dan, and you went in after Jim because your Uncle Dan sent you?

'Gosh!' said Danny, and looked upon me as a wizard.

'Tell me all about it, Danny. Perhaps I can help.'

'Well, sir, it were like this,' he said stoutly; 'all the other chaps had sisters and cousins and aunts and things, and I never had nobody, and I felt kind of out, and I just made up Uncle Dan to be upsides with 'em. An' I made him just as I'd ha' liked to ha' had him if I'd had him really. Bin at Watterloo, an' lost his arm an' his legs an' all the rest of it. An'—an'—' and there was the suspicion of a shamefaced break in the clear little voice—'an' I tried to do things as I thought he'd ha' liked me to do 'em. An' it done me good, sir, so what's the odds?'

'Danny,' I said, 'you're a little trump. Now tell me one other thing. What were you saving the rest of that money for?'

'I were goin' to write myself some letters from Uncle Dan,' he said, with a twinkle in his eyes.

'Well now, Danny, I'm going to make a proposal to you. You've got no Uncle Dan, and you want one badly, to be upsides with the other fellows. Will you let me be your Uncle Dan, and look after you a bit?'

The blue eyes sparkled like diamonds, and filled suddenly, and his head went down into his arms on the table, and he sobbed silently for the space of two minutes—an emotion that I should imagine was very foreign to him—and my heart rejoiced exceedingly that this happy thought had been given to it.

. . . . . .

I have never had one moment's cause to regret my self-election to the post of Dan's Uncle Dan, nor, I think, has Danny.

We corresponded with him regularly, and visited him fre-

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quently in barracks when the regiment went home, and found more to like in him every time we saw him.

All that happened some years ago. Before me on my desk as I write lies a letter dated from Omdurman, September 3, 1898:

'DEAR "UNCLE DAN"' (since he came to years of understanding Dan has never omitted the quotation marks),—'We had a tough time, as you will have seen from the papers; but I came through all right. They've made me full sergeant' (he was just turned twenty-two), 'and I'm down for the V.C. But it was nothing. My sergeant (Braden, I've told you about him) was alongside me in the charge. We came on one nasty bit of ground where we had to jump our horses in and out, and not too much room, and the fuzzies slashing and shooting and howling like' (there is a word carefully inked over here and 'mad' written in above it). 'Braden's horse went down in a heap, and him with it. I was next him, and I saw it was only the horse was hurt. The black and white' (another word carefully inked over and 'dervishes' written in above it) 'came down on us like hail' (this word had also undergone revision), and began chop-chopping away —and I can tell you their swords do cut. My horse was a brick, and danced about round Braden till he got on to his feet again. Then we made a dash at the blacks and hurt several of them, I believe; and then the lieutenant came back for us with a score of the boys, and we came out right except for a few cuts more or less. Everybody says it was a fine bit of work, for they were 3,000 and we not over 400. Everybody is talking of Colonel Macdonald. He did the hardest fighting of the day. He rose from the ranks, and I'm going to do the same.

'Love to all. Yours very gratefully,

'DAN RENDLE (Sergt., V.C.).'

I am proud to remember that I am Dan Rendle's Uncle Dan by adoption, and I think it likely I shall be prouder yet.

He sprang from nowhere in particular, but I think he will go far.

JOHN OXENHAM.

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In the Name of a Woman.

By Arthur W. Marchmont,

Author of 'By Right of Sword,' 'A Dash for a Throne,' &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

FACE TO FACE.

SOON after Zoiloff had left me I sent for the spy. It was part of the scheme that he should be liberated at once, in order that, if he pleased, he should carry the news that he had heard to his employer.

The interview was short. I told him I had determined to spare his life and set him free if he would take a solemn vow never to reveal what he had heard, and to leave the country at once. There was no mistaking the genuineness of his terror, and he was eager to take any oath I wished to impose. As I dismissed him I said, with all the sternness I could concentrate into my voice and looks:

'Remember that from this hour you are a marked man. Every Russian agent in this country will know you; your every action will be watched, and every word you speak will be noted. One breath of treachery, one single suggestion of further deceit, and you are a dead man. Your life hangs on the thinnest of threads. And if ever you feel tempted to break your oath, recall this night and the stern faces of the ring of men who voted that you should die. Go!'

He staggered out of the room, reeling like a broken-witted drunkard.

After my regimental work on the following day Zoiloff came to me, looking worn and wearied.

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'I have been at work all night,' he said; 'but I have done good. I have found a place where this woman, Bokara, can be held in absolute safety for ten years if necessary, if once we can get her there.'

And he told me that one of our party, named Kroubi, had a large house in the middle of his estate, in a tower of which just such a prison as we sought could be found.

'You are sure of the man?'

'As of myself. And he himself will be her keeper.'

'She is a woman of rare fascination.'

'Would she fascinate me, think you?' he asked, a smile on his rugged face.

'There are not many men like you, Zoiloff,' said I, warmly, for during our intercourse he had won upon me strangely. He was such a staunch, genuine, thorough fellow.

'That is pleasant hearing from you,' he answered. 'But you need have no fear on Kroubi's account. Every impulse of his strong character which is not devoted to our cause is absorbed by his hatred of women.'

'We will trust him, then,' I agreed. 'And now let us consider how to get her to his place.' And when we had threshed this out and made our plans the time for the Countess Bokara's visit was close.

I felt both anxious and excited. The whole future of our plans hung, as I knew, in the balance, while the risks of the interview between her and the Princess seemed to grow as the time approached.

The Princess arrived first, and I went to her immediately.

'Has she come?' was her first question, eagerly asked.

'It is not yet time; but I think she will come. Do you know what happened here last night?'

'I have heard something, but would rather hear it all from you. It was good news, I believe—but it was sure to be, you are so zealous in my cause,' she said. 'Tell me everything.'

I told her and she listened, deeply interested, her eyes watching my face as I spoke. At the close she smiled and said:

'One would think from your telling, Count, that you had been merely a bystander instead of the prime mover in it all.'

'Captain Zoiloff did more than I, for it was he who detected the miscreant. The rest was simple enough.'

'Then should I keep my feelings and words of thanks for

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him, and think of you as one who serves me, as it were, by routine?'

'We are all devoted to your service, Princess,' I said.

'No one more faithful than the others?'

'None less faithful than myself, I hope.'

'I like that standard. Pray Heaven that you are right, for then I am a lucky woman indeed;' and her eyes shone with a light that was like to dazzle me.

'You will be on your guard this afternoon with the Countess Bokara,' said I, after a pause I found embarrassing.

'I am always on my guard—except, I think, with you,' she added, musingly.

'I mean, you will not let her approach too close to you. I know her to be a dangerous woman, capable of any madness.'

'You will be there,' she said, with an accent of trust in me which I read with delight.

'But still she must not come too near you. Infinite mischief might be wrought in a single unguarded moment.'

'You think she may even try to murder me in your presence?'

'I believe her capable of any desperate deed; that is why I urge you,' I cried, very earnestly.

She smiled, let her eyes rest on mine with a look that seemed as tender and warm as a ray of summer morning sunshine, while a faint blush tinged her cheeks.

'I will not cause you a moment's needless anxiety; you have had too many on my account already,' she said gently; and in the pause that followed a servant entered to say that the Countess Bokara was waiting to see me.

We had arranged that I should see her first alone, and I found her in a mood of jubilant and boastful confidence.

'I knew you would come round to my views, Count, though I confess I did not think the effect of what I said yesterday would be felt quite so quickly. I was disposed to give you at least three or four days, but I like you better for your promptness.' She spoke exultingly.

'I am not so confident as yourself that our interview will end to your liking,' I answered.

'I am confident, and have even more reason for it than you at present dream. You may prepare yourself for great news.'

'I am not good at riddles. What news do you mean?'

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'That I do not consider your help so necessary as I once thought.'

That there was some new danger beneath her words I was certain, but what it was I could not guess.

'I do not understand you,' I said shortly.

'A child could see that. I like the look of perplexity and fear on your face;' and she laughed in a hard, sneering tone. 'You have been very useful to me, after all, though you do not know it. What you showed me yesterday gave me the clue; and I have been merciful—in a way, very merciful. Death is ever sweetest to a woman when it comes, or seems to, from the hand of one she loves.'

'You have a pleasant wit, and your laugh fits it well,' I said drily.

'A jibe moves you more quickly than a threat, my friend. And this is a jibe in which you have had unwittingly a big share;' and her bitter tone was in full harmony with the hard, confident glance which she levelled at me. 'Did you think I could be merciful even to those I hate?'

'Have you come to do no more than discuss your own qualities?'

'I have not come to be your dupe,' she retorted fiercely. 'You have discovered my spy, I find, and I congratulate you on the clever stroke with which you have blinded his eyes. But it is too late, Count.'

'The man was caught last night in the very act of spying, and narrowly escaped with his life. He confessed you had employed him.'

She waved her hand, as though the matter were nothing.

'He had served his turn, let him go. I have no longer need of him; and, of course, you would have killed him had your last night's meeting been anything but a clever ruse. But you scared his poor wits out of him—not a very brilliant or difficult achievement perhaps—and by now he is off to the frontier as fast as his shaky legs will carry him. But that is nothing. Tell me, Count, what would you do if within an hour you were to hear that your Princess had fallen dead?'

'Probably I should seek out her murderess, and kill her,' I replied hotly.

'Good; then I was right. You do love her, eh? Then listen. She trusts you, of course, trusts you blindly and implicitly;

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and if you sent her a little pretty gift, a little gentle act of courtesy from so gallant and faithful a servant, would she prize it, think you?'

'I don't wish to discuss such matters with you,' I answered; but in my heart felt glad indeed that the Princess was safe in my house at that very moment.

'You don't wear your heart on your sleeve, you mean. Men of your sort always think they do not. And yet the knowledge of the love of such a man would be precious to many women. That is how you have been useful to me. Now can you read the riddle?'

I thought I could, but made no reply.

'Yesterday, when I was here, you showed me what you could not hide from my eyes, that this woman had drawn you to her, as she has drawn hundreds of others. But this time she has dared to draw you from allegiance to me;' this with a touch of sudden passion, which passed instantly as she continued in a tone of exquisitely modulated softness, suggestive of the purr of a tigress, 'When I left you I saw how I could use the secret I had surprised. By now I have done my work, so I may speak frankly. I shall not want your aid now. Thinking that the Princess might be pleased with a little token from her latest lover—you need not wince, it does not matter now who knows your secret—I sent her in your name a little emblem of your devotion. And what more fitting emblem could there be than a rare and beautiful rose?'

'It was an unwarrantable liberty, Madam,' I cried, with a flush of anger. She laughed at my indignation.

'But it was more than an emblem of devotion, for it carried in its soft, sweet petals the essence—of instant death. You know these things are common in this East of ours. One scent of that rose, enjoyed, no doubt, with a murmur of your name, and a thought of your welcome little courtesy—and I and my Prince were rid of her for ever.' A light of malignant triumph flashed out of her large dangerous eyes as she finished: 'I shall not need your dagger now, nor the other weapons of your trade.'

'You mean that the Princess is dead?' I asked quietly.

'The news will soon be spread abroad noisily enough; and you may find it sufficiently embarrassing to explain your share in it.'

'You have the malice of a devil.'

'It was a sweet death for her. Was I not right when I said I was merciful?' she cried, with another hateful laugh. 'And

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now I have come to warn you, that you may fly if you wish while there is yet time.' She gloated in triumph over my silence, which she read as that of consternation.

'You are a brave woman,' I said at length. 'If what you said were true you might have guessed that you would not leave this house alive.'

'It is true,' she cried daringly.

'Yes, as to intent, perhaps. But the Princess herself is safe, and here in this house waiting to see you.'

'It is false,' she said fiercely. 'I don't believe you;' and she stared at me, the veritable type of disconcerted fury.

'It is true,' I replied shortly; adding sternly: 'And true, too, that though you failed in the act, you shall answer for the intent.'

She was magnificent in her rage, as she stood at bay, staring open-eyed at me; and for many moments not a word was spoken by either of us.

'Let me see her!' she exclaimed at length.

'Not alone,' said I significantly. I rang the bell.

'Tell the Princess Christina we will wait upon her,' I said to the servant; and a minute later the two were face to face, while I looked on all anxiety and apprehension as to the result.

They stood for a moment looking at one another; the Princess calm and dignified, in an attitude of queenly grace, her speaking, lustrous eyes alight with the hope with which she had sought the interview. But the hope was quickly clouded with a dash of anticipative disappointment, caused by the Countess Bokara's vehement passion and hate which envenomed her fiery glances, and spoke in every straining movement of her lithe sinuous body.

'Your Highness surely does me great honour in this reception,' said the Countess scornfully, breaking the short silence.

'I am sorry we have not met before,' was the mild, temporising reply. 'I would have gladly seen you to remove your too evident prejudice against me.'

'I have heard that you are accustomed to rely much upon the attractions of your beauty. But I am not a man.'

'I am desirous only of disarming by mutual understanding so powerful and, as I have too much reason to know, so bitter an enemy. Tell me, Countess, why are you so bitter against me?' The tone was very gentle, almost solicitous, but I could see that the other's sneer had gone home.

'Why should I tell you what you must know full well?'

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'If people speak truly of you we have assuredly the same end in view—the welfare of Bulgaria.'

'I am not half a Russian, and the tool of tyrants.'

'Am I?' and the Princess's eyes flashed. 'Your agent has discovered our real designs and carried them to your ears. You know now our cause is the cause of freedom, and that we are no more the tools of Russia than you can be. Why, then, say this? And why my enemy?'

I was astonished and not a little dismayed by her frankness.

'Your conversion has been rapid. It is but a few nights since your friends, impelled by zeal for you and for your cause, tried to murder me.'

'That was not done with my knowledge. God knows I would not spill a drop of blood. What would your death profit me or the end I have in view? Do you think I am so mad as to wish the country to believe I desire to rule by terror, the sword, and the secret dagger?'

'They do believe it!' cried the Countess in a tone of hate; 'and they do not wish you to rule at all. Who has called you to take the place of the Prince, to plot against him, and to drive him from the throne? What are you doing but nurturing and fostering the villainous ingratitude of the people, that by this act of double treachery you may mount the throne?'

'You forget, the Prince is himself resolved to abdicate,' I interposed.

'And why?' she asked hotly, turning upon me. 'Why, but that the plots which the Princess here and those in league with her have organised against his life are driving him away?'

'This is no work of mine, Countess. Before my name was ever mentioned, before the thought of my ever taking the throne was ever suggested, the Prince's position had become untenable.'

'Because your allies, these hateful Russians, had made it so in preparation for your coming, or the coming of some other tool.'

'But now that you know I am acting not for, but against, them, the cause of your enmity, if this be the cause, is removed.'

'Do you wish me to join you, then, to swell the train of your slaves?'

'I wish to disarm your hostility.'

'To suborn me from my allegiance to my Prince, you mean?' Her answers were growing in bitterness and vehemence each time

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she spoke. 'Your Highness mistakes me. I am no traitor to my sovereign.'

'But the Prince is bent on abdicating.'

'Because you and others are driving him to it. You ask why am I your enemy. This is the reason, or one that will serve.'

'You have others.'

'Yes, I hate you. Is that what you wish me to say? I hate you. Is it as musical for you to hear it as for me to speak it? I hope it is. I hate you, and thank my God that I have a chance of telling you the truth to your face.' Her passion, only lightly held in restraint, broke its bounds now, and her eyes flamed, and her lips quivered with the rush of it. 'What have you ever done in regard to me that has not earned that hate? Where are the men, good and true to the Prince and myself, that you have lured away from me? What are your actions, one and all, but those of deadly antagonism to me? Am I a craven sheep that I shall see my friends alienated, my Prince threatened, my cause destroyed, and my very life attempted, and only bleat a few baa-words of thanks to you for your gracious thoughts of me? God has not inspired my heart with that meekness, and while I have breath to breathe, a voice to speak, and hands to do, I will be your enemy. Is that enough, your Highness?' She spoke with such furious vehemence that at the close she was breathless; and she clenched her hands, and glared with hate at the Princess.

'I have not done the things you say. I could not do them,' said the Princess, in a tone whose calmness did not hide from me the ache of disappointment in her heart.

'It is easy to deny. It costs but a breath,' was the sneering answer. 'But you ask me will I cease to be your enemy?' she added, her eyes flashing dangerously. 'I will—on one condition.'

'What is that?'

'One that will at least test your sincerity. Give up this enterprise of yours; cease to persecute my Prince, and I will cease to be your enemy.' She put the conditions with a leer of malice, and stood waiting for the answer with a curling lip and insolent mien.

'I am not persecuting the Prince, and from my heart I declare that if Bulgaria could be freed by him I would serve him only too gladly.'

'I think no good can come of prolonging this interview,' I said, for I could not bear to hear the ring of insult in every word

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which the Countess uttered. But my interposition was ill-timed and unfortunate. Turning partly toward me the Countess said, in a tone of simulated submission, the irony of which was maddening:

'Your Highness's newest and most faithful adviser would spare your ears the blunt utterances of truth from my rough lips. A renegade is always solicitous to temper the wind for his latest mistress.'

I drew a deep breath of rage at the insult and the foul slander insinuated with such devilish adroitness.

'The Count is right, Madam, I must admit my defeat,' said the Princess haughtily.

'I must ask you to withdraw, Countess,' said I sternly.

She laughed with wanton insolence.

'I am no servant of yours to be bade to do this or ordered to do that. I came to this interview to please you, I shall leave it to please myself;' and she drew herself up to her full height in defiance. Then she laughed again a loud, ringing laugh, forced, of course, but a clever parody of spontaneous merriment. 'Upon my word, this is a pretty scene, and I have vastly enjoyed it. I have, alas! no weapon with me save my tongue, or there should have been a different ending, I do assure you. But that I can use. You have shrunk from the truth to-day, as the Count here shrank yesterday, when I discovered the secret of his warm allegiance to you.'

'Silence, Madam!' I cried hastily, fearing what her rash tongue would say.

'Is he not earnest, your Highness? Is he not a man to be proud of? To warm a woman's heart? I told you just now of men you had won away from my Prince and me—here stands the latest of those renegrades, a man who loves you.' She uttered the words with an accent of assumed sincerity. 'I congratulate you, Princess, upon your conquest. I cannot hope to regain for my Prince a man who is aflame with a new-born passion for you.'

'This is monstrous!' I cried, my face flushed with anger and concern. 'If you do not leave the room, I shall summon my servants that they may remove you.'

She faced me unflinchingly.

'You dare not,' she said.

'Then be silent, and end these ill-timed jibes, and leave the room.'

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'Jibes? Is that a jibe?' And she raised her arm and waved it to where the Princess Christina stood, her face covered with deep ruby blushes. 'An unconventional love avowal, at any rate. You are a brave man, Count Benderoff, and I do believe that much rarer thing, a modest one; but at least you should not quarrel with me because I tell the Princess that you love her, and let you see by the surest token that a woman can give that she loves you in return.'

At this the Princess sank upon a chair and concealed her face in her hands, between the white fingers of which the deep red glow was showing.

I turned away and would not let her think I had seen it.

'Your cowardice and insolence have drained my patience,' I said fiercely to the Countess. 'Come,' and I went to the door.

She stood a few seconds, as if hesitating whether to defy me longer, and glanced in infinite triumph at the troubled figure of the Princess.

'If the interview has not accomplished your object,' she cried, 'at least it has not been without interest;' and with a last insolent, exultant laugh, she swept out of the room, followed closely by me, more resolved than ever to cage this angry, dangerous tigress.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COUNTESS'S RUSE.

As we crossed the hall she turned to leave the house by the front door, where Zoiloff was standing.

'I have something still to say to you,' I said shortly, as I opened the door of the room where I had seen her before this futile interview.

'You wish to thank me, I suppose, for having been the means of revealing to each of you the other's love,' she answered, with another of her flaunting laughs; though she changed quickly and said: 'You may spare your thanks. I had a purpose—and you will soon learn the reason. I am a dangerous woman, for all your contempt of me.'

'Too dangerous to be at liberty, Countess,' I answered curtly. 'It is to tell you that I have brought you here.'

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'What do you mean? That you will dare——' The words died away as she read my purpose in my eyes, and the first symptom of fear I had ever seen in her showed itself, only however to be at once crushed out of sight. One of her bitter sneers followed. 'So I have put my foot in a trap, you think, and your lovely Princess is but a paltry decoy. A truly royal part for the august ruler that is to be!'

'Your railing falls on unheeding ears, Countess. I have made my decision.'

'You are an ingrate, my lord the Count; and in your haste to strike at me you are forgetting the wound you do to your Princess.'

'Your insulting references will not turn me from my course,' I said shortly, my anger against her burning like a fever.

'Then shall I say you honour yourself and the woman you love by imprisoning me for discovering and revealing your love secret; and that you give proof of your courage by keeping me here that you may stay and gloat over your victim?' I saw her start as some fresh thought struck her, and she looked sharply at me and appeared to search her memory rapidly. Then she smiled the same exultant smile that I had noticed before, while a dangerous light came back to her eyes.

'I will not attempt to escape.'

'It will be useless—the house is sufficiently guarded, and we have prepared for your reception.'

'I am content if you but give me your company, for you are a man on whose feelings it is a delight to play, and should make a pleasant gaoler.'

'I shall not be your gaoler, but you will be in safe hands. I have only to warn you that any effort to escape my custody will be useless. You probably know me well enough by this time to be sure of that.'

'I am sure of one thing—you will not keep me here. Let me give you my reasons.' There was again a sudden but complete change in her manner, as she spoke in a calm, collected tone. I distrusted her every mood, this calmness as much as any.

'I can't stay to listen. I wish you merely to understand that it will avail you nothing to beat against the bars of your cage.' As I spoke I turned to leave, and with a quick rush, while my eyes were off her, she was at the door as soon as I. I put my hand to it to prevent her opening it, and to my chagrin she locked the door herself and put the key in her pocket.

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'I have that to say to you which cannot wait even to suit the woman you love. If I must stay here, so shall you;' and she walked to the other side of the room and threw herself into a low chair, from which she looked at me defiantly.

This manœuvre perplexed me vastly. I was all unwilling to remain, and yet I could not leave now without either a struggle to get possession of the key or by summoning assistance to have the door broken in. I cursed myself for my folly in having allowed the key to remain on the inside, although I could not have foreseen this dilemma.

What was her object? Had she any beyond the desire to keep me in the room while she loaded me with her invective and reproaches? What had been the thought which had struck her, and which had seemed to lead to her sudden assumption of calmness?

'Do you think it strange that I should wish for your company, Count?' she asked in a voice soft and gentle enough to have been the medium of a love message. 'For all your ungentle treatment of me and for what I deem your faithlessness, I can find it in me to admire you. I have said some bitter things to you, I know. Forget them. Take them for the ravings only of a violent woman —or better, the revilings of a disappointed one. It is no light disappointment to lose such a man as you.' Her tone was one of subtle witchery, tinctured with a sadness that might have sprung from a genuine regret. But I knew her; and all the time she was speaking with this cat-like softness I was racking my brains for the reason of her action.

'If you don't give me that key, I shall summon help and have the door beaten in,' I answered. 'I am in no mood for any theatrical display.'

'I will make a bargain with you. To summon your servants and have to admit to them that you have been locked in by your own prisoner will make you very ridiculous. The strong, clever leader of this great movement caged by a woman! But I will not banter you, and will not make you even ridiculous. Listen to my reasons and you shall have the key. Refuse to listen, and do what you please. You shall not have it from me if I die in defending it. It will be quicker to listen.'

'State them quickly. I will give you three minutes,' I said, reflecting that what she said was true, and as blind as a fool of a bat to her real intent.

'I will put them very shortly,' she answered, speaking in a

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slow, deliberate tone, altogether foreign to her usual habit. 'You love the Princess and she loves you. You are angry with me because I have discovered your secret; but do you suppose that the Princess could endure that Bulgaria should think she decoyed me here that she might imprison me? That is what they would think first. But when the truth is known, as it must be some day, will her woman's heart bear the reproach that she imprisoned me because I surprised her and your secret and told you of it? Is your love so guilty a thing that the bare mention of it is a reason for consigning me to a prison unheard and untried? Is that how a pure Princess can start her reign? Is the avowal of such a love so base an act that anyone a witness of it must be hurried to a gaol to silence her? Think you these are means by which she will conciliate her new people? Or, taking another reading, can you believe that the Bulgarian people will love a ruler whose ruthless instincts of tyranny are manifested even before she touches the steps of the throne, by dragging away a rival for a man's love and thrusting her into an impromptu gaol because the regular prisons of the country are not available? No, I tell you; you dare not do this thing, and your Princess dare not lend herself to it.'

I listened coldly, but not without concern, for I saw the strain of probability that underlay her malicious ingenuity.

'You are not imprisoned for any such act as you pretend, but because you would betray the facts your spies have discovered; and, if you want an additional reason, because you have dared to attempt——'

I stopped, and dashed my hand to my head in horror. In a moment I saw her cursed intention.

I had said no word to the Princess about the deadly rose which this woman had sent to her in my name; and this fiend, guessing by her woman's instinct that the Princess would hurry away after what had been said about our love, had imprisoned me here to delay me, so that even now at the last moment the devilish scheme might succeed. And I, like the fool I was, had been duped by her infernal cunning.

I felt like a madman. She saw by my agitation that I had guessed her scheme, and before I could move she sprang from her chair, and rushed to the door to put her back to it, facing me like a wild beast at bay, to fight for the last few moments that might be so vital to the success of her plot.

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'You look agitated, Count. You are not going to leave me?'

'Stand aside, you fiend, or I won't answer for myself. I know your object now. Stand aside; do you hear?' I cried.

'I will not. Touch me if you dare.' But the life of the Princess was at stake, and I thought of nothing else.

'Zoiloff! Zoiloff!' I shouted at the top of my voice, and, seizing the Countess by the arm, I strove with all my force to drag her from the door. She fought and struggled like a wild cat, and her strength was so great that for a while she resisted all my efforts, clinging with desperate tenacity to the handle of the door, the lever of which gave her a secure hold.

'Did you call, Count?' came Zoiloff's answer in muffled tones through the heavy door.

'Is the Princess Christina gone?'

'Yes, some minutes since;' and at the words a light of Satanic triumph shone in my companion's eyes, and seemed to give her fresh strength for the struggle. Every moment was precious.

'Get help and burst this door in,' I shouted; but even as I shouted the words the thought of the minutes that would be thus wasted maddened me, and I resolved to take the key from the Countess's pocket.

'You force me to this,' I said between my teeth, and, seizing her round the waist with one arm, I held her in a grip of iron while I plunged my hand into her pocket. To use up the last possible moment she struggled with frantic energy, writhing and twisting and hindering me till I vow I could have killed her. My blood was up, and the thought of Christina's danger urged me to spare no violence, and half a minute later I had secured the key, and hurled the woman away from me.

As I opened the door, Zoiloff and a couple of men with axes had come up.

'Good God! what has happened?' cried Zoiloff, falling back before my looks.

'Keep that hell-cat safe till I return,' I shouted, and, hatless and dishevelled as I was after the tussle for the key, I dashed out of the house, and ran at my top speed through the street.

By good fortune I met one of my grooms exercising a horse close by the house; and before the man could recover from his surprise I had half pulled him from the saddle, clambered up in his place, and was clattering at full gallop towards the Princess's house, heedless of all or any that came in my path.

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The moment I reached it I jumped off, sprang up the steps, pealed the great bell and thundered at the heavy knocker, never ceasing till the porter opened the door with a half-scared face.

'The Princess! Quick, man, quick, for your life!' I cried like a madman. 'Where is she?'

'In her boudoir,' answered the fellow, staring at me as if I had been a wild man, as indeed I almost was. I ran by him and mounted the stairs with leaps and bounds. On the landing above stood a footman, peering down curiously at the disturbance.

'The Princess's room! Show me instantly!' and my mien and voice were so threatening that he fell back pale and frightened, and pointed to a door.

I knocked, but did not wait for an answer.

'Are you there, Christina?' I cried, excitedly, not heeding that I used her Christian name only. 'Christina!' I cried again, when I did not see her.

And then, to my inexpressible relief, she came out from an inner room. She was holding a small package, from which the outer wrapper had already been removed. I rushed forward and tore it from her hand, saying not a word, and heeding nothing of the look of surprise and alarm which my wild presence and strange act had called to her face.

Then with a fervent 'Thank God!' as I held the accursed thing safe in my grip, crushing the fragile box in my straining fingers, I fell upon a chair, and, clasping one hand to my eyes, tried to fight my way back to calmness.

The rush of relief was an intoxicating delight, and in my rapture at her safety I could have shed tears. For the moment I was utterly unmanned. The agony of suspense during the minutes since I had learnt of her danger had well nigh bereft me of my senses; and the relaxation of the strain, with the knowledge of her bare escape from death, made me as weak as a child.

'You are ill, my friend. What has happened?' she asked in her sweet, sympathetic voice, laying a hand on my shoulder.

The touch was like the balm of Gilead to my ruffled senses, and then a sudden shame fell on me, and in a moment I realised how strange my wild conduct must have appeared in her eyes. I remembered, too, that in my delirium I had called to her by her Christian name. And at the thought my confused and dizzied wits were more jumbled than before, and, strive as I would, I could force no words from my tongue.

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My silence alarmed her.

'I will summon help,' she said; but I stayed her with a protesting hand, and thus we waited while I struggled for some measure of composure.

Many moments passed in this strained, embarrassing silence, till I was sufficiently master of myself to make an effort to speak to her. I rose, still holding the crushed little package as fiercely as though it were a thing of life. She looked at me with a smile, intending it to veil her alarm and anxiety.

'Princess, I crave your pardon. I—this package—I——' I stopped, stuttering at a sheer loss for words. A tinge of colour mounted to her face as she said in a tone much less warm than before, and, as I thought, not without a note of rising indignation.

'It is the package you sent me, Count Benderoff.'

'No, no, it was sent to you in my name—to poison you.' She started back and stared at me. 'I will try to explain. I have acted like a madman; I have been almost one, I think. This thing'—holding it up still gripped fiercely—'was sent you to-day by that woman. By the mercy of heaven it arrived while you were absent, and your visit to my house saved you——' And in a shambling, jumbled, half-incoherent way I told her what had occurred.

The colour in her cheeks flowed and ebbed as I spoke, and I saw an ever-varying light in her eyes as they were bent upon me, now in indignation, again in horror, and yet again in gratitude mingled with feelings which now I almost dared to read as my heart dictated.

When I finished my disjointed narrative, she thanked me very simply, though her agitation, heightened colour, and tender glances told me how deeply she was moved. Leaving me for a moment, she returned with the wrapper of the package and a card of mine on which were scribbled my initials in a handwriting much like my own.

'This was with the packet,' she said, giving me the card. 'But I have never seen your handwriting.' I saw in a moment that the spy in my house could easily have stolen the card for the Countess Bokara.

'Could your servant identify the messenger who brought it?'

'For what purpose, when we know who sent it?'

'It is a case with which the courts could deal.'

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'No, no, no,' she cried hastily, shaking her head. 'I could not do that.'

'Well, it does not matter. She is in safe keeping, and I can mete out the punishment myself. I will keep this evidence for future use;' and crushing packet and card and wrapper together, I pushed them into my pocket.

'What do you propose to do, then?' asked the Princess.

'She cannot be left at liberty with our secret in her possession.' Till I had uttered the words I did not see their double meaning. But the Princess did instantly, mistaking me indeed, and her face grew so crimson that she turned away to hide her confusion. 'I mean the knowledge of our plot,' I made haste to add, awkwardly, the explanation serving only to accentuate my clumsy blunder, and add to our mutual embarrassment in the pause that followed.

I was mad with myself for the slip, and yet delighted at what it helped to reveal to me. With an effort I shook myself together, and said in a tone almost cold and formal:

'The sure and certain use she would make of her freedom would be to tell General Kolfort that we are duping him.'

'That is a risk we must run,' she replied, her voice low and trembling.

'It is one we dare not run. It would be worse than madness,' I protested hastily. The thing was impossible, unless we meant to ruin everything.

'It would have to be done in my name. And that cannot be. You must see this.' The agitation in her voice was evident, and she kept her face averted from me.

'Your Highness cannot mean this.' The earnestness of my tone moved her, and she cast at me a quick glance of appeal.

'Cannot you see that it is impossible?' But I felt I must be deaf to any appeal.

'You have trusted me so completely that I should be untrue to you and to all concerned in this matter, Princess, if I listened to you. Believe me, it must not be. Her captivity is our only road to safety. We have dealt with this spy of hers, and she herself told me that he was flying the country in a panic. She alone holds this terrible—this knowledge of our plans, and if she remains at large, nothing can save our scheme from shipwreck. You know, even better than I, what effect a word breathed in the General's ear would have. Believe me, I dare not let her free. No harm

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shall come to her. Not a hair of her head shall be injured; but in our charge she is and must remain. There is no possible alternative.'

She locked her fingers tightly in the stress of her perplexity, and a strained, drawn expression showed on her face.

'No, no; it is impossible, impossible,' she cried, in a tone of distress. 'I see the dangers, but this I—I cannot, and will not do.'

The mocking words which the Countess had spoken when I was locked in the room with her gave me the clue to the struggle in the Princess's mind, and I dared not ask her to tell me her reasons, that I might combat them. But with me they had no weight.

'This is no matter, Princess,' I ventured to say, 'in which any considerations but the most impersonal reasons of policy can be allowed to prevail. I beg you earnestly to pause before taking a step that on my soul I know must be fatal to everything.' The words brought a look of flashing reproach.

'You tell me this! Can't you see what would be said of me if I sanctioned such a thing? No, no, no; I cannot, I cannot, I will not,' she cried impetuously.

My eyes fell before hers, but yield I would not.

'Will you permit me to withdraw now, and we can speak of this matter another time? Meanwhile——'

'Meanwhile you will do that which will compromise me in the eyes of all Bulgaria,' she cried vehemently.

'I shall do no more than your safety and that of all others concerned with us in this matter demands,' I answered stubbornly. 'We have no other object but your safety and success.'

'Do you think I will set my liberty on such an issue—that I will consent to be held up to the whole country, ay, to all Europe, as——' She stopped, and a vivid blush spread over her face, but, drawing herself up with head erect, she added with a truly royal air: 'Count Benderoff, as the Princess Christina and your future Queen, I lay my commands upon you to set the Countess Bokara at liberty without delay.'

'Your Highness has no truer follower than I, and my future Queen will have no more loyal and faithful subject, but this command I cannot and will not obey.' I bowed low, and, raising my head, met her look with one as firm and resolute as her own.

We stood thus for perhaps half a minute, and then a striking

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change came over her face. Her eyes fell, and I thought I had won. But it was no more than a change of weapons on her part.

She came close to me and took my hand in both hers, and looked then into my eyes with a soft light that only love could kindle.

'What you refuse as a command, grant me as a favour. I plead to you as a woman to do what I ask. I pray you by whatever regard you may have for me. Must I plead in vain?' Her hands were trembling in mine and her voice quivering as she sought my eyes and held them with a look of yearning love that left me no room for any thought but how to please her.

What could I do, loving her as I did with all my heart, but yield?

CHAPTER XV.

A HOPELESS OUTLOOK.

EVEN while I was on my way from the Princess Christina's house I began to realise the consequences of the mistake we were making. I had been miserably weak to give way, and, although my head was half giddy with the rapturous remembrance of her words and glances, and dazed with the thought that she had appealed to my love, I was angry with myself for having yielded.

I half dreaded to meet Zoiloff. I knew what that sturdy fellow would say, and was inclined to fear lest he should make a shrewd guess at the reasons which had influenced me. One thing was certain, he must not be present when I saw the Countess; for I knew that she would blurt out the truth in her sneering, vindictive tone.

She would publish it, too, far and wide, and in a few days all Sofia would ring with the secret of my love for Christina and of hers for me. That alone was enough to ruin the cause, since it must inevitably rouse old Kolfort's suspicions.

When I reached the house I was told that Zoiloff was with the Countess Bokara, and I sent for him. I said in as few words as possible that it had been decided to let the woman go free, and I gave some more or less fictitious reasons of policy for it. But they did not impose on him for an instant.

'It is wrong, Count, absolutely wrong, and you should never

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have consented. She will ruin everything. I propose that we just ignore the Princess's wish and keep that fiend close all the same.'

'I have passed my word, Zoiloff.'

'I am very sorry to hear it, but I haven't; and there's nothing to prevent your setting her free and my taking her again. Everything is ready, as you know, and the thing would be easy enough.'

'No, I can be no party to it,' I answered firmly, although the notion pleased and tempted me.

'Then you may as well throw up the sponge.' He spoke angrily.

'It may still be possible to blind the General's eyes.'

'You are more sanguine than you look or your tone implies if you think so. I don't believe it for a moment. There's always something goes wrong where a woman is concerned.'

'I will send this one packing, and then we can consult.'

'There's not much left worth consulting about,' he answered as I left him.

The Countess greeted me with a sharp, shrewd look, and then her face showed a keen disappointment.

'I have failed, I see. You needn't tell me,' she said.

'You are not yet a murderess—at least of the Princess,' I returned, harshly, for I hated the woman.

'You have taken a long time over your rescue and love business; but I suppose you have much to talk about. It's the way of lovers!' she cried with a laugh. 'Besides, you had to settle what to do with inconvenient me. I am afraid I am very much in your way, Count—quite as much trouble to you as if you had remained faithful to me.'

'If I had my way you would not give me much more trouble.'

'Ah, then I was right. I knew that she would never dare to try and keep me a prisoner. Will you see that a carriage is ready for me?' She spoke in a tone of indifference.

'If you have any gratitude in your nature you will remember that it is to the Princess that you owe your liberty—to the woman whose life you have just failed to take.'

'And am bitterly regretting my failure. That is my gratitude. But why cant to me of gratitude? Do you suppose she has done this for my sake? Nonsense; I told you her reasons before you went to her. Am I a fool, that you prate to me in this childish strain? I tell you I am an enemy, and a woman to be feared. She is a fool to let me go; and I know it as well as you.

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Were the positions reversed—but there, she has given you a heavy task, Count, heavy enough to tax even your cleverness; and you can lay your plans on this one solid and sure foundation—that I will do my worst against you and her.'

I made no answer, and, ringing a bell, ordered a carriage to be brought round at once.

'You look very solemn, Count,' she said, when the servant had left the room and I was going. 'And you have plenty of reason. But I'll do you one favour, and tell you that I have already begun my work, and have told that ill-bred soldier who was here and seems to be in your confidence the whole story of your love for the fair Christina; and it had a very pretty effect upon him. But it prepared him, no doubt, for this step;' and she laughed insolently. 'At any rate, you can be frank with him without that shamefacedness with which one man speaks to another of his love. What he is thinking about it to-day—and I was careful to sow the seeds of fruitful contemplation in his mind—all Sofia will be openly talking to-morrow, including your new Russian friends. It was injudicious of you, wasn't it, to leave me such a companion?'

I could endure no more of her taunts, and went out of the room, closing the door quickly to shut out the sound of her mocking laughter. When the carriage was announced I went back to fetch her, and, as if her malicious instinct could always hit upon the mood most exactly calculated to jar upon my nerves, she was now disposed to play the high society dame, and, with all the airs and graces of a capricious beauty, was for delaying me to chatter idle nothings, in a tone of empty frivol, about the weather, the recent ball, and my health, until I cut her short by saying sternly:

'The carriage is waiting for you, Countess, and I have no time for this wearying badinage.'

'I thought you might wish your servants to think this was merely a call of ceremony;' and, as if to irritate me with these little peltings of frivolity, she continued to chatter in the same tone until she had taken her seat in the carriage. Then, with a quick change of manner, and a malignant glance at me, she said:

'When we meet again you may find the positions reversed, Count, for I warn you to look to yourself.'

I gave no sign of even having heard her, and watched in silence as the carriage drove off.

'There goes our last hope,' said Zoiloff, looking moodily after the

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carriage, as though he would have given all he was worth to have dashed after it, and have torn the Countess out of it back to captivity.

'Now let us consider what to do next,' I replied.

'There is nothing to do next, or after,' he said, in the same moody tone. 'When such a woman holds the future of our scheme in her hands we can do nothing but prepare for the worst, and look out for the best means of escape. It will soon be a case of *sauve qui peut.*'

'I shall fight on till it comes, then, and so will you, my friend, when this mood has passed.' I took him into my private room and, putting wine and cigars before him, set to work to try and shape a course to suit the altered aspect of affairs.

My own opinion was not much brighter than his; but I sought to persuade him, and myself too, that matters might yet be mended. There was one possible door of hope. The Countess meant to have her revenge, and, as she had frankly said, we must base all our plans on her implacable enmity. But she had other ends than those of mere personal vengeance. She hated Christina bitterly, but she loved the Russians no better. Her aim was to keep her Prince on the throne, and to betray us at once would certainly injure him by forcing General Kolfort to act immediately, not only against us, but against the Prince. The latter would be frightened and jockeyed out of the throne, to make room, not for Christina, but for some more pliable tool; and the Countess was quite shrewd enough to foresee that.

'I am inclined to believe,' I said, after we had discussed the position at great length, 'that she will seek her ends first by other means than by betraying us to Kolfort—some scheme or other against the Princess or myself personally, perhaps; but something which may take time to work out. She will cling to the hope of retaining the Prince on the throne to the last possible moment; and she may reckon, as she has done hitherto, that by removing the Princess the Russian scheme will be so maimed that the Prince may be able to retrieve and retain his position—at all events for a time. She may now include me in some such plan of assassination. The question for us to consider is, then, how soon we can complete our arrangements, by hurrying them forward at fever heat, so as to make us indifferent to what Kolfort can do.'

I continued to urge this from every standpoint, until I saw with great satisfaction that Zoiloff's enthusiasm began to heat again. But suddenly his face clouded, and he said:

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'Are you forgetting the strange story she is going to tell about yourself and the Princess? I know nothing of it, of course,' he added, as though in assurance of his faith in me. 'But if such a tale should reach old Kolfort—and she seemed mad enough to scream it from the housetops—you can judge what he may think.'

'There is a ready answer to it,' I returned, gloomy now in my turn at the thought behind my words.

'You mean denial. I don't like to speak of this, Count.'

'I do not mean denial only in words. They count for little enough in a time like this,' I replied bitterly.

'What then?'

'The Princess's only answer will be the hurrying forward of her marriage with the Duke Sergius. It is the inevitable corollary of her decision to-day.'

'By God, but you are a man, Count!' cried Zoiloff, with a look of genuine sympathy, as if he felt instinctively what such words must cost me. 'From this hour I will never again question a single order you give or decision you take.' He held out his hand, and grasped mine in a warm pledge of earnest friendship. 'We will go on, as you say, and frustrate this she-devil yet—or fall in the effort.'

A long silence followed, in which we were both busy with our own thoughts; and when the silence was broken we went on with a long, detailed discussion of the means to be adopted to quicken our preparations and expedite the arrangements that should make us indifferent to any action by General Kolfort.

The work interested us both absorbingly, and while Zoiloff remained with me, and my thoughts were occupied in planning the work to be done, I was even inclined to accept my own arguments that all was not yet lost.

But when he had left me a relapse came, and I seemed to be overwhelmed with a sense of the weariness and futility of it all. I had nothing now to gain. A few hours had changed everything for me, and all my enthusiasm had evaporated, like the sparkle from flat wine.

Bulgaria might profit, but what was Bulgaria to me? I had not been fighting for Bulgaria, but for Christina; and what prospect was there now for her but the gloomiest? I had gained the priceless treasure of her love; but with the very ecstasy of the knowledge had come the bane that I could never even win happiness for her.

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I laid bare my heart to myself in this bitter self-communing. I had tried to persuade myself before that mine was that rare thing —the rarest on earth, indeed—selfless love; but I knew now that that had been the flimsiest gauze of self-deceit veiling the secret hopes and desires that had urged me forward. Out of the inmost thoughts came up now the skeletons of my lost desires, gibbering and mouthing and mocking me with the hopelessness of my love.

If I could have made her happy, have helped her to realise the dream of her life as the Virgin Queen pouring on this distracted people the infinite blessings of freedom and happiness, herself a bright, conspicuous example of innocence and purity to all the world, I might have been content to worship even while I served her. But to think of her as the wife of the sensual brute I detested, forced to submit to his loathsome endearments, and to smile and frown upon him in his humours, was like a very torment of hell to me. And for her it must be ten thousand times worse. Her life, mated with a man she abhorred, would be one long, living lie, the canker of which must blight her every purpose, and destroy every hope in her heart.

And yet I, loving her and beloved by her, was to help her to this life of fair-seeming misery and honoured dishonour. I could not and would not, I cried in my heart—and yet I knew I must. There was no escape now from it. As I had told Zoiloff in my despair, the hastening of the marriage was the one possible means of averting that instant ruin in which the power of the at present all-powerful Russian agents could involve us all.

Harder than all else to bear, however, was the thought that I myself must pass that inexorable sentence upon her. She had made it essential by her shrinking woman's fear of how her act would be read in the eyes of Europe; but it was left for me to show her the full consequences of what she had done.

In my frenzy I was tempted to regret that I had saved her from the infinitely more merciful fate of death. Deeply as I loved her, I would vastly rather see her dead than the wife of the man whose wife she was now inevitably bound to be.

For a moment a wild thought rushed through my mind—that I should induce her to fly the country with me. But the thought was as great a treachery to her as the act would be treacherous to those whose cause she championed with such pure-souled enthusiasm. I recalled with the iciness of a lover's despair her declaration that she would even become the wife of this man, if

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no other path were open, rather than abandon the cause she had espoused.

There was no escape; and when at length I threw myself on my bed, brain wearied with the long wild fighting against the inevitable, it was only that the torture of my waking thoughts should be reproduced with all the grotesque horrors of oppressive, sickening dreams.

I awoke with the dawn, dreading the coming of the hour that would bring with it the ordeal of the interview.

For myself my course was soon decided. I would keep my word, and go through with the task of leading the movement to such a successful issue as we could yet snatch from the dangers surrounding and threatening it. But the hour that saw her safely seated on the throne should be my last in the country.

I was revolving these gloomy thoughts over an untasted breakfast when Spernow came.

'You look ill, Count;' for the struggle had written its effects in my face. 'Yesterday's doings have upset you.'

'It is nothing worse than a headache,' I answered carelessly.

'I hope your nerves are not unstrung. You will need a clear head to-day unless I have read things wrongly.'

'What next?' I felt that nothing which could happen now would either interest or trouble me. I had lost the one thing which I desired, and life itself might go for aught I cared.

'I was at a house last night and heard something which you must know at once. It concerns you closely, and spells danger.'

'What was it?' Feel interested I could not, feign it I would not.

'The Duke Sergius has resolved to force a quarrel upon you. He has some deadly grievance. I heard it incidentally, but—— Why, Count, what is the matter?'

He might well be astonished. The news was the one thing on earth that could have changed me, the one thing that might yet change everything. In an instant my lassitude and despair fell away like a cloak. My blood warmed, my heart beat fast, my cheeks glowed again, and life was worth living and risking. Even if I were destined to go straight to my death at the hands of the rival I hated, I should have a moment of real enjoyable life, while, if my hand were true and my skill what I believed it and I killed him—— I could not stay to think, but in my eager hope that the news might be true I plied Spernow with question after

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question, testing his story, till he might well have deemed me insane.

'Of all the gifts and riches of the earth that you could bring me, Spernow,' I cried in my vehemence, 'there is none I would have in preference to this news. By Heaven, man, but you have made me live again!'

(*To be continued.*)

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At the Sign of the Ship.

EVEN as I write the relief of Mafeking is ancient history. Still, one cannot but utter a brief cry of pleasure at being a fellow-countryman of the gallant defenders. From the children and women to the brave, resourceful, and humorous commander, they did credit to human nature. People, it seems, can still endure hunger, danger, isolation, labour, and hope deferred, as well, and even more humorously, than they did in Jerusalem, Carthage, Samaria, Haddington, Londonderry, or Leith. But it is one thing to hold out against a civilised enemy, and another to resist an enemy who will give no quarter, nor spare age or sex. In the old wars the besieged had little chance for life or honour if they failed. So they had a stronger motive for resistance. Let us hope that the horrors of Badajoz and Drogheda are obsolete; though we can never be sure that the tiger and ape in human nature are conquered. Of all sieges, that of Londonderry is the most exciting, partly, perhaps, because the story is told by so admirable a narrator as Macaulay. The siege lasted only half as long as that of little Mafeking, but the garrison was much larger—seven thousand fighting men—and was far worse provisioned. The melancholy humour of the situation lay in the fact that an English provisioning fleet was actually in sight, and that the boom might have been forced, as the result showed, by resolute men, at any moment. The first ships that tried to pass did pass, and apparently might have passed whenever they chose. I wonder if the besieged found, like a friend of mine in Ladysmith, that their internal machinery, for lack of practice, could not for long cope with ordinary food. There is a true tale of one of the Ladysmith garrison who came into a large fortune during the leaguer; but the only luxury he could buy with his new wealth was a pound or two of canary seed. The soldier-servant of a friend of mine was blown to pieces, early one morning, by a shell. He lived long enough to tell my friend that he was so glad that he had first got his breakfast ready.

* * *

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Mr. Froude has a pleasant story of the French besieged in Leith by an army of Englishmen, and by the Scottish Protestant levies. The besiegers, on the night of April 30, made a breach. On May 1 they found the breach repaired, and Maypoles decorated with May garlands standing on the walls. That was a touch worthy of General Baden-Powell, especially as Maypoles were an abomination to the Protestants. It is fair to add, however, that a Catholic Government in Scotland, and not the Reformers, was the first to put down 'singing about summer trees' and the festival of Robin Hood.

* * *

It is very hard to get at the origin of Robin Hood. The Editor points out to me that after a progress of Edward II. in the Sherwood region (1423) one Robyn Hode appears among the retainers of 'our goodly King,' as the ballad calls him. Now Edward II. was in person goodly, though the adjective may be a mere ballad commonplace. To this Robyn and his claims I return later. Ritson saw in a collection of Peck's a Latin poem, apparently of 1306, in the title of which much was said to the discredit of William Wallace, 'that Scottish Robin Hood.' This would throw Robin back behind Edward II., but then the Latin title may have been written much later than the poem, and, in fact, seems to have been written by Peck himself. I am stealing the erudition of the late Dr. Child. The earliest known reference to the outlaw sportsman is in 'Piers Plowman,' about 1377, some forty years after Edward II. Robin and his games were popular in Scotland by 1440, and were celebrated in ballads, *in romanciis*, which were sung by bards, *bardani*, says Bower. Now it is odd that the Scots borrowed a hero from hostile England, if that hero was a real person, and not an old mythical character common to the English race in the Scottish lowlands as well as to the English south of Tweed. But English garrisons were so long in Roxburgh and other Scottish fortresses, from Edward I. to James II., that their spring games and their Robin Hood might be borrowed. In the same way, the Jews of the Exile seem to have borrowed, in the Book of Esther, the Persian festival of the Slaying of the Magi. Wyntoun, writing about the end of the fourteenth century, regarded Robin as a real person, who flourished his quarterstaff under Edward I., in 1283. Dr. Child will not be moved by the reference to Robyn Hode in the account books of Edward II., in 1323. In November this Robyn was given five shillings because he was incapable of work, and he disappears from the accounts.

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Dr. Child does not believe that the Robyn Hode who was incapacitated by eleven months' work, and turned off with five shillings, can have been our hero. He knows, from records, of six real Robin Hoods, in a period of forty years, between 30 Edward I. and 10 Edward III. The name was, therefore, common enough; and, on the whole, I doubt if the dismissed porter was man enough to have been the hero of a great legend.

* * *

Some of the learned mix him up with Woden, which seems a wild conjecture. Let me offer a guess of my own. The Robin Hood sports were what the French call *quêtes*; that is, collections were made from passers-by, and at houses, as in the old Greek spring sports of the swallow, or the Scottish Hogmanay games, or as, even now, on Guy Fawkes day and May day. Children now, and men of old, made the vernal and other sports an excuse for demanding money. And this was the reason why, about 1555, the Scots Parliament denounced Robin Hood; he and his band extorted money too violently, too much in their assumed character as outlaws. The heroic Robin is a person who robbed in a jovial kind of way. Now, granting that there were from remote antiquity vernal sports, originally magical and meant to aid 'the spirit of vegetation,' and grant that they lost that sense and lingered as mere revelries and excuses for asking for money, the old King of the May might easily be conceived of as a genial, jolly robber, collecting coin by a show of violence. Then, if there ever was a popular brigand called Robin Hood, his name might be applied to the chief figure in the brawls, while the Queen of the May became Maid Marion. We know that Kings and Queens of the May were crowned in Scotland before the time of Robert Bruce. On this conjecture, they were later named Robin Hood and Maid Marion. This might be in memory of a real Robin; as Robin Hood was a name common enough to be chosen at a venture. The exploits of Robin in the ballads, again, may be a mere reflection cast back from the exploits of the high-handed collectors of money in the May games. Thus the rather violent collecting of money may be the cause of the whole legend of Robin, as a genial marauder. People found the custom of such collections or *quêtes*, asked themselves why they existed, and answered by the myth of the Sherwood outlaw.

* * *

This theory, I own, needs better support than I can give. It

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is based on an Act of the Scots Parliament of 1555.[1] 'It is statute and ordained that in all time coming no manner of person be chosen Robert Hude nor Little Iohn, Abbot of Unreason, Queens of May, nor otherwise.' Provosts, bailies, and town councils must not elect Robert Hude & Co. Those personages, male and female, made 'perturbation of the lieges' by asking for money, and that is why they were put down. One needs more evidence, beyond the common custom of demanding money on such occasions, for the prevalence of the usage in the case of Robin Hood games. There was a great Robin Hood riot in Edinburgh on June 21, 1561. One James Gilloun had been condemned to death for playing Robin Hood, and his gallows was erected; but 'the prentices all' arose, smashed the gibbet, besieged the provost, and rescued Gilloun with a pardon. Knox and the preachers then excommunicated the whole mob (Robin Hood, in this case, had been robbing right and left). Queen Mary pardoned them all when she entered Edinburgh on her arrival from France. Perhaps some one can show that the Robin Hoods of the English May games were also rather predatory.

* * *

Everyone has read Mr. Stevenson's account of how he invented stories in his dreams. M. Bérard, a deputy in the French Assembly, and at one time a magistrate, seems to dream in as lively a way as did Mr. Stevenson. I find his narrative, first published in 1875, in M. Flammarion's book, *The Unknown* (Harpers). M. Bérard, about 1885, had been examining into a horrible crime. 'Day and night, for several weeks, I had seen corpses, blood, and murderers, both [when] sleeping and waking.' M. Bérard went for a holiday to a little town in a forest. After a long walk, as the town was five or six miles away, he stopped, had supper, and slept at a dirty little roadside inn. His room was above the stable. In addition to the door which he could lock, he found a door, without a key, behind the hangings. This door led to a ladder. M. Bérard, unable to lock it, placed a table and chair against it, so that no one could enter without making a noise. He was wakened by a sound, thought he saw the glimmer of a candle through the keyhole, called out, received no answer, and slept again. In sleep he saw the room he occupied, with some one in bed. His very ill-favoured host entered, a long knife in his hand, by the hidden door. The dirty hostess followed with a lantern. They stabbed the person in bed—and here M. Bérard

[1] *Act. Parl. Scot.* ii. p. 500.

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has a Stevensonian touch. As the pair carried the corpse down the ladder, 'the husband held between his teeth the slender ring which supported the lantern, and the two murderers descended the narrow stairs [ladder, before] by the dim light of the lantern.' Here we have genuine imagination. M. Bérard, naturally agitated, dreams exactly what *must* have occurred if a murder took place in the given conditions. Next morning he awoke and went back to his quarters.

* * *

Three years later he read in the newspaper an account of the disappearance of a M. Victor Arnaud, a barrister. He, too, had left the little town, for a walk, had been seen at the dirty road-side inn, and never again. M. Bérard went to the town. He entered the rooms of the local magistrate while he was examining the hostess of the dirty inn, and he was allowed to hear her evidence. She said that Arnaud did come to her inn, that both her chambers were occupied, two (which was corroborated), and that Arnaud walked away.

'But the *third* room, the room over the stable,' cried M. Bérard, careless of judicial etiquette.

The woman started and stared.

M. Bérard exclaimed, 'Victor Arnaud slept in that third room. During the night you came with your husband, you holding a lantern, he a long knife; you climbed up by a ladder from the stable; you opened a secret door which led into that chamber; you yourself remained on the threshold of the door while your husband went to murder the guest, before robbing him of his pocket-book. . . . Then you took up the corpse, your husband holding it by the feet; you descended the ladder with it. In order that you might have light, your husband carried the ring of the lantern between his teeth.'

'You saw it all then?' said the woman.

Then she refused to sign her depositions or to speak again.

M. Bérard's colleague read his recital to the husband, who exclaimed, 'Ah, the ——, she shall pay me for this!' He seems to have supposed that M. Bérard's narrative was his wife's evidence. The body of M. Arnaud was found, under a heap of manure, in the stable. I suppose 'extenuating circumstances' were allowed for as usual.

* * *

M. Flammarion, who publishes the story in his book of marvels, hints that M. Bérard could perhaps furnish corroborative

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evidence, 'if he would look into the *dossier* of the Victor Arnaud affair?' But why did not M. Flammarion look himself, and why did he not consult the magistrate who tried the case, and heard M. Bérard tell his tale to the woman? Without taking this amount of trouble the case is quite incomplete. Of course nothing 'supernormal' is involved. If M. Bérard was to dream of a murder, under the given conditions, he could scarcely dream of it in any other way. For example, the murderer, as both his hands were engaged in carrying the corpse, was obliged to hold the ring of the lantern in his mouth. He could hold it in no other way. The story is a good story in itself, but, as it stands, is of no value as evidence for 'premonitory dreams.' Indeed, for a scientific man, M. Flammarion is very easy as to the quality of the testimony to his anecdotes.

* * *

It is time to organise resistance against people who ask us to subscribe to memorials and testimonials to interesting persons, dead or alive. I am not unwilling to give of my abundance in a good cause, for the soldiers of the Queen, or the Indian Famine, or to any poor body. But to be drawn for four memorials and testimonials in one day; for a portrait of Prodgers, a tea-service to Jenkyns, a window to the late Tims, and a fountain to perpetuate the memory of Snobbins, is really too hard. We all feel it, every one of us, yet we go on subscribing. I denied two of the four, but have not pluck enough to be consistent all round. Let us make an oath and keep it with an equal mind to subscribe to NO memorials or testimonials, except when our hearts are really moved to do so, as they sometimes are. There is no end to the busybodies who ask us to pay for a portrait of some homely and unenticing old party's features, or for a monument to some justly forgotten minor poet, long under the daisies. We have not now the nerve for solitary resistance. A society, an Anti-Memorio-Testimonial Society is needed.

* * *

It seems hardly a wise thing in a writer in the *Fortnightly Review*, for June, to offer a brief account of a poor young author of verse and prose, who took haschish at College (Queen's, alas!), wrote verse (after Mr. Swinburne), prose (after Mr. Henry James and Mr. Wedmore), and died lately in circumstances which call merely for silent pity. The ravaging ambition to be 'Bohemian' was the cause, apparently, of this author's misfortunes, as of many another disaster. To imitate persons like the late M. Verlaine

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(at however decent a distance) is distinctly futile and superfluous. We learn that the poor young gentleman who imitated Mr. Wedmore (in style, not in daily life) never read Dickens. Better it were to read Dickens, and not to base a style on Mr. Wedmore —or on anybody, for that matter.

* * *

The Author is, however unconsciously, a paper full of entertaining matter. In the number for June a novelist and journalist expatiates on the unlucky lad about whom so much is said in an article of the *Fortnightly Review*. 'At the present moment,' says the good, hospitable soul of this journalist and novelist, 'there may be many other —— ——'s living lonely and unrecognised in London.' This is rather hard on —— ——, for if there may be many such persons, then they are no longer rare and irregular. 'I should like to tell them that if they care to make acquaintances with strangers who would like to be friends, they will always be welcome at our house.' And he encloses his name and address. I never saw a more sympathetic proposal, or an example of a simpler and kinder heart. But in practice the thing would not do. People who seriously set at work to be 'decadents' or 'Bohemians' are not fitted for the family circle.

* * *

A writer in the same serial, Mr. Spielmann, has my warmest sympathy. This sweet enthusiast wrote 'a book upon Mr. Ruskin.' There is no good in writing a book on Mr. Ruskin if you are *not* a sweet enthusiast. Mr. Ruskin was, and he wrote vastly about himself; and, to be sure, in a very pleasing manner. I know not why any other enthusiast should write even yet again on Mr. Ruskin. However, Mr. Spielmann was of a different opinion, and 'he did more; he did it,' as the Prophet Nicholas observes. And then his tribulation began. His book was published in the United States, with an introduction by a party whom Mr. Spielmann knew not. Never had Mr. Spielmann besought this Transatlantic author to write an introduction to his book. The American gentleman was, I gather, 'a poet, writer on Art, and director of one of our largest institutions.' Still, Mr. Spielmann had no use for the poet, director, and man; and he said so to his American publishers. 'The question is whether an author cannot rest between his own covers without, so to say, having a strange—though, I am willing to admit, a most exemplary and distinguished—bedfellow forced upon him by the publisher, unasked.' Mr. Spielmann is r[illegible] situation borders

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on the indelicate. When an author is dead (and out of copyright) he cannot help himself. Boswell could not kick out Croker, and Mr. Spielmann implies that Scott is helpless when I am forced between his covers. I am not afraid to meet Sir Walter. Apart from many old associations of countryside, kindred, and common friends, Sir Walter liked dogs, and I can offer a doglike fidelity, love, and devotion. He may let me rank, in the shadowy world, with the shadows of Camp and Maida. How Lord Byron may get on with Mr. Henley and Mr. Prothero, I do not pretend to guess. But, while yet one lives and at intervals beholds the sun, to be thrust into the 'same covers' with a poet and 'director of one of our largest institutions,' to share such narrow quarters with an unintroduced Introducer, is hard, as Mr. Spielmann justly complains. I wonder if he has any remedy? I wonder if he and Mr. Ruskin can get rid of the poet and director? I wonder whether Mr. Ruskin pined sorely to be written about by Mr. Spielmann? Personally, I greatly object to being written about by anybody. 'Come not when I am dead,' Mr. Spielmann, to vex the unhappy dust you could not save. I don't want, after my decease, to be told in a Tennysonian manner whether the daisies or violets blow, or quite the contrary. Probably they will go on blowing much as usual. If they don't, it will be 'all one to Hippocleides.' By the way, Fielding, Bage, Smollett, Mrs. Radcliffe, and many others, were never asked whether *they* wished 'to rest within their own covers without' Sir Walter Scott. He got between their covers; he wrote Introductions to their works; so he obviously thought there was no harm in the practice. As he did unto others, I have done unto him, and, as was already observed, I conceive that he is not disturbing his Elysian leisure by indignation. Among other problems suggested by writers in *The Author*, I wonder if *et haec genus omnes* is good Latin? *Hoc genus omne* I know, from the newspapers, but *haec genus omnes*? What does it, what can it mean? The scholar who quotes, or invents, the phrase, says 'my literary vanity has been satiated long ago.' Perhaps it was satiated at school, if he ever *was* at school.

* * *

Who is the champion hard hitter of England at present? Mr. Jessop, probably, would carry most votes, but I give mine for Mr. V. T. Hill, of Somerset. Years ago he made over a hundred for Oxford against Cambridge by a series of fours, into, or over the ropes. Yesterday, which was June 4, he met better

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bowling, that of Trott, Jack Hearne, Roche, and others, he playing for Somerset against Middlesex. Mr. Hill treated the new bowlers in the fearless old way. In his first over the last ball would have gone high over the old pavilion: it hit the very crest of the new pavilion, and fell back into the seats in front. Again we were treated to four fours in an over, and all the hitting was clean and well-timed, without apparent exertion. Seventy-two runs in thirty-five minutes; has Mr. Thornton or Mr. Jessop beaten that record?

* * *

Mr. Macrae has been correcting the Poet Laureate for saying 'England,' in verse, where 'the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland' would have been more correct. But really scrupulous Scots, like Mr. Macrae, ought to think twice, or even thrice, before calling Scotland, 'Scotland.' For *that* means the land of the Scots, who, of course, were *Irish*, or Celticised Picts. To call Scotland 'Scotland' is, in fact, as good as to admit that the invading Irish conquered Scotland, under Kenneth MacAlpine. To Scotland they certainly gave their Irish name. Mr. Macrae is probably of a clan of Rosshire—'a' the wild Macraws are coming'—and, for all that science can tell, he may be of Pictish descent. Perhaps he ought, in due obedience to sentiment, to call his native country 'Pictland;' or 'Albyn' might be safe. But, if he is of Dalriadic origin, then Scotland is quite the proper word for Mr. Macrae to employ. On the other hand, 'Scotland' is injurious to the feelings of Picts, and of Lowland English north of Tweed, also of Brythons in Strathclyde. It is difficult, Mr. Macrae will see, to please everybody. If he and his friends would try to get the history of Albyn taught in the schools of Albyn, it would be more to the purpose.

ANDREW LANG.

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The Editor requests that his correspondents will be good enough to write to him informing him of the subject of any article they wish to offer, before sending the MS. A stamped and addressed envelope should accompany the MS. if the writer wishes it to be returned in case of non-acceptance. The Editor can in no case hold himself responsible for accidental loss. All communications should be addressed to

The Editor of LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE,
39 *Paternoster Row, London, E.C.*

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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

AUGUST 1900.

One of Ourselves.[1]

BY L. B. WALFORD,

AUTHOR OF 'MR. SMITH,' &c.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TWO PATHS.

TASTES differ.

Old and time-worn is the phrase, but who can deny the truth of it?

William Farrell finds Leonora Massitur a wishy-washy thing, Lionel Colvin asks no greater boon of Heaven than to be allowed to lay himself at her feet. She realises his ideal of all a woman ought to be. He never asks himself if she is beautiful or clever. I think that beauty and talent do not appeal to Lionel, but he has a peculiar and fastidious standard of his own, and this graceful girl, with her sweet, sympathetic nature, her sunny inexperience, her thoughtful tenderness, her delicate simplicity, her gentle piety—nay, the very refinement of her dress—so plain, he would have told you; so costly, had he but known it (and why not costly? Leonora had an exquisite taste, and 'You are a proper person to buy fine clothes, my dear,' says Lady Blanche)—all combine to satisfy him at every point.

Lionel's sisters, when annoyed, vote him a prig. We are not prepared to dispute the epithet, but would ask our readers' forbearance for a young man who, having a proud, shy, sensitive nature to begin with, has had all its fibres stiffened by self-repression, whose cherished theories have never known fresh air,

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nor the breath of healthy ridicule—who, in short, has been forced back upon himself throughout the whole period of immaturity, when free intercourse with his kind is the prig's salvation.

It may be added that Lionel Colvin had not been denied this *bonne camaraderie*; but can a boy, a youth, be free and jolly when abidingly ashamed, despised, neglected? Others talked of their homes, and he had no home; of their people, and he knew nothing of his people. He was kept so short of money that often he did not know where to turn for a penny. Silence was his only refuge.

Reunited to his sisters and established in a house of his own, things were so far improved that Lionel thought himself a happy man, held his head up, and whistled as he walked. He began to have tastes, kept a dog, and talked of a horse. 'Next year, when we see how we stand,' said he, for he had a horror of debt.

And no doubt the girls were good company, besides being fond of him and leaning much upon him. He supposed they were pretty—yes, certainly, they were pretty. But, as we have hinted, looks went for little with him, and at the bottom of his heart he had not that pride in Bet, Poll, and Georgie he could have wished for. In some of our earlier pages we have shown how they often disturbed his convictions, and set at naught his prejudices; and we should not again have referred to the subject but that the absolute subjugation of Lionel Colvin beneath the charms of William Farrell's 'wishy-washy thing' seemed to demand a species of explanation.

We will now proceed with our tale.

It only needed Bet's assurance that her supposed lover was quitting the field—for in what other light could his departure for Scotland be regarded at so critical a moment?—to relieve her brother's mind of anxiety on her account and enable him and Georgie to turn their thoughts in a happier direction.

Bet had been trifled with shamefully. Lionel would have liked to kick the fellow, horse-whipping being out of date.

But the despicable episode would pass into oblivion, and it was a blessing things had gone no further, an especial blessing that the Massiturs did not know how far they had gone already.

Both of them felt heartily sorry for poor Bet. It was natural that she should go about moping and miserable for a time, particularly after the final interview, during which no doubt she had learned plainly that no more was to be expected from a flirt

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who had amused himself at her expense, but who had never harboured any serious intentions.

'I wonder how he dared, with me here,' cried Lionel grandly but in his heart there was something of the old self-depreciation. 'If I had been a swaggerer sort he wouldn't have dared,' concluded he, mortified.

Still the thing was at an end, and there was relief untold in the thought. No more worrying with hopes and disappointments; no more struggling to be pleased when Billy was propitious and affectation of being unconcerned and impassive when he was unpropitious. 'We have had a vile time of it,' owned he candidly, 'and I suppose it has been partly our own doing. We might have known better; other people would have known better; but we simply played into his hands. Bet too!'

They all felt 'Bet too!' An indignity offered to either of the others would not have been deemed so gross.

When Bet came with a set face to lay before her brother, as in duty bound, a schedule of expenses probable and possible which would be incurred by Poll and her on their trip, she was received with a burst of open-handed liberality that coloured her cheek with disdain. She understood it and rejected it.

'He is glad to part us. He will pay any price to part us,' thought she; 'that is the meaning of his wishing to give double what is necessary.' And she refused to take the extra sum.

She began to think that Billy had a clearer insight than she had supposed. Hitherto she had held to it that she knew her own folks best; that the irritation and vexation which was not to be denied on the part of her brother and sisters was occasioned by their misconception of a lover's timidity and the complex character of his devotion. This last was of too fine and rare a quality to be appreciated by them; they would have had William Farrell rush at her full tilt with a proposal in the ordinary, commonplace way, and their lack of perception was exasperating enough. But she now took a step further, and shutting her own eyes, saw through those of her master.

'I believe they hate him,' cried she at last; and her soul was filled with bitterness.

'Poor girl! But a nice change to the sea will soon put her right!' prognosticated Lionel, cheerfully. 'Anything is better than this sort of thing hanging on. It's bad enough that it should have happened, but now that the smash has come there's an end of it. A jolly good end too!' and he could not for the

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life of him keep his face from breaking into smiles directly Bet's back was turned.

'She couldn't really have cared for that sawney ape,' he confided to Georgie.

'Oh, but she did,' cried she.

'She thought she did; she was gulled by him; and of course he's clever and all that. I don't say she was to blame, but——'

'You know, Lionel, I do think she feels it very much. It isn't just as you think. It isn't the new thing you think. It began ages ago——'

'Not it.'

'It did; before you knew, before any of us knew, before she knew herself. I can see it now. When we were simply adoring Billy——'

'How on earth you could!'

'Oh, we could, and did. We were infatuated with him—Poll as well as the rest. Only with her and me it never went below the surface, and with Bet it burrowed deep down. When I look back I can see that she was always different about him from what we were. The day we buried him——'

'Buried him!'

'Tut! the mock Billy. I'll tell now; I don't care. We made a mock Billy—Poll did; a horrid-faced thing, but as like him as two peas—and we played all sorts of games with it. That was in the days when we laughed at Billy. Then when we turned round, and he was a kind of tin god to us, the mock Billy was a regular white elephant. We didn't know what to do with it. It went through no end of vicissitudes,' and she laughed at the recollection.

'We got rid of it at last by a grand burial,' proceeded she. 'You asked me once what that headstone in the woods was for? That was the grave. Well, Bet was queer over that. She was raging inwardly while Poll and I were cutting our jokes; and she used to go by herself to the place; but it isn't fair to tell all this. Only I want you to see that she won't get over it in a hurry. She is hurt and sore——'

'I know that. I can see that.'

'Don't expect her to forget too soon, Lionel.'

Sobered by her tone he nodded assent, and continued to shake his head profoundly for some minutes after he was alone; but she had to give another admonition next day.

'Billy has been to bid us "Good-bye," Lionel. Don't go in

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just yet' (he had been met at the gate). 'She is crying—a little. I came outside to catch you. Mind you don't seem to see.'

'As if I would!'

'Don't speak too kindly; that was all I meant. You called her "dear" last night, and it nearly upset her. She wants not to seem as if there were anything.'

'That's right. I dare say she is beginning to see——'

'Oh, no, it is not that yet. She will, you know, by-and-by; but Bet always does take things hard. She can't help it.'

'I hope she didn't show before him?'

'Not the least. Oh, not in the very least. It was splendid,' enthusiastically. 'We just talked and laughed, and she was as gay as anybody; but I could see her gripping her hands together under the table. He was really very pleasant—just his old self. You know he hasn't been his old self of late to Poll and me; but he tried to catch up and part with us all in a kind of halo. So it went off as well as possible, though I *was* glad when it was over. He sent his "Good-bye" to you.'

'And I am sure I send my "Good-bye" very willingly to him. If I ever have a chance—but that's the worst of it, and that's what he knows well enough, confound him! He took such devilish good care never to outstep his bounds——'

'And he let out something—something that showed he was only going away from here because he had done with us, not because he had to go. We all saw it. I know Bet saw it as well as we. He is not off to Scotland till next week; he is stopping in London first.'

'You did not suppose he needed to go anywhere if he chose to stay. Of course Scotland was only a pretext.'

'He had made out that he had an invitation.'

'I knew a bank could not be left to itself for any length of time,' said he; 'all the other partners are away, and until they, or one of them, comes back, he is tied to it.'

'So he said now; he did not say so at first. To-day he said he had a number of things to see to, and couldn't get off even for the few days he wanted—it has got down to a few days—without a lot of arranging.'

'What is that to us? It all comes to the same thing. He means to break with us, and whether he is in London or Hong Kong is no matter. I don't see why you——'

'I thought Bet seemed to notice it,' murmured Georgie, vaguely. 'It made it more marked, didn't it?'

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'It was marked enough to *me* before. However I'm glad of anything that helps with her. They are preparing to go to-morrow, aren't they?' glancing towards the house.

'We have been preparing all day. And, oh, Lin, you should see my new portmanteau and hat box!' Suddenly all disagreeables vanished from the volatile Georgie's mind. 'They do look so smart and carriagey. Bet said I must have things fit to go on the Massiturs' carriage—I should never have thought of that—and she and Poll are to have the old broken-down trunks with their torn corners. Bet has been so good; she has looked after every single thing of mine, even though she isn't pleased with me; and she took some trimming off her own best frock and put it on my second-best without telling me. She did not mean me to know, and smuggled it in among the other things when my back was turned; but we had to unpack to get out something beneath, so then I saw. I tried to thank her, but she snapped me up. That's her way. I shouldn't have minded if she had done it as she used to do,' with a sigh.

'Never you mind; it will all come right.' He was still philosophical. Philosophy is easy when one's own affairs are swimming.

And Lionel, who might have been supposed to be in the depths of despair, or at least of anxiety, viewing himself from his Uncle Umfreville's standpoint, was now the wonder of his sisters. He was Colonel Colvin's son; he loved disinterestedly, and love transformed the man.

It must also be added that he would have been a fool indeed if he had not long ago discovered that Leonora's aunt was on his side, which, as everybody knows, is a very great matter with a young lady of Miss Massitur's sort.

'My niece has been left entirely to my charge,' confided Lady Blanche to her young friend once. And, in case he should not have been sufficiently impressed, she returned to the charge another day. 'I am Leonora's sole guardian. I am responsible to nobody. Her parents willed it so.'

She was like a child in her eagerness to have the thing settled. Delightful, delightful to have her Lionel back again in the person of his only son! The very man for Leonora! A man to whom the dear, simple girl could be confided without a shadow of distrust. A man so obviously in love too.

'And Leonora, poor child, is not exactly the girl to inspire *une grande passion* if she had to rely entirely on her own attrac-

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tions. She is the sweetest angel; but angels are not—beside those little wild things,' cried she, contrasting involuntarily, as William Farrell did, 'my poor darling Leonora *is* tame. Now of course Lionel, as a brother, does not see this. I fancy he has no idea how his sisters, one and all, sparkle beside Leonora. There is no other word for it. They are so bright and witty. The dear girl is quite happy to be outshone. She loves them the better for it. When I have secured her happiness I must certainly turn my attention to Bet, Poll, and Georgie,' decided her ladyship with secret glee.

On Leonora's part it was, 'I don't wonder that auntie has never forgotten her old love. How could she marry Uncle Gerald? She says she was so young and so completely under her mother's influence; and that her people cared nothing for what a man was, but only for what he had. So they told her what was untrue and made her think all sorts of things. But if I had been her I would *never* have given him up!' cried the gentle creature, feeling herself a rock of adamant.

So that Lionel was very happy about his own affairs, and it is hardly to be wondered at if he took Bet's more lightly to heart than he would otherwise have done.

Indeed, now that the episode was closed his principal solicitude was lest more of it than was absolutely necessary should filter through Georgie's incautiousness to the ears of the Massiturs. He little thought that it would be his own lips which should disclose all.

The small party was not to break up till Liverpool Street Station was reached on the following day, when the two who were bound for the Isle of Wight were to be despatched to Waterloo. 'But I don't see why we shouldn't go round that way and see them off, as our train does not leave for two hours after theirs,' suggested Lionel, breaking off at this point of the arrangement.

'Why should you?' retorted Bet, ungratefully. 'I suppose we have never seen ourselves off at a station before.' For she would not accept any overtures.

'I could take your tickets, and get your seats,' said he kindly.

'Thank you, Lionel,' said Poll.

No one else said 'Thank you;' Bet made an impatient movement.

'She thinks we are suspecting her,' divined Georgie—'suspecting that he may appear at the station.'

Lionel, however, was obtuse. 'You won't have us? All

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right; I dare say it would be an additional expense. It is a longish cab drive either way. Will hansoms do for us?' Even Bet saw that she had wronged him.

'A hansom will do for *us*,' said she, less ungraciously, 'but Georgie's luggage is more elaborate, and I dare say you have two portmanteaux?'

'And a gun-case,' owned he.

At Liverpool Street accordingly the two forces parted company, and, as demonstrations of affection in such a place were not to Lionel's mind, he did not notice, as Georgie did, that she alone received a farewell kiss, which also was a cool and perfunctory one on Bet's part. Poll, following her sister's lead, merely nodded to her brother as she took her seat, and as the two rattled off hers was the only face which looked round to nod again in response to their signals.

'I suppose I am still in disgrace,' laughed Lionel. He was so happy that he could not but laugh, and feel relieved by the removal of the lugubrious countenance whose damping influence was not to be denied.

Now he and Georgie could bustle along merrily. But what was this? A hand-bag which was certainly never intended for the menials at King's Beacon to see! Poll's hand-bag—'the oldest, meanest, vulgarest thing!' cried Georgie, in deep disgust. 'Oh, Lionel, what shall we do with it? I won't, I can't take it. We told her it was like a servant's, but she said she had no other, and must have one. Oh, that tiresome Poll!' in despair.

'Tell you what I can do,' said Lionel, whom nothing could provoke in his present state of mind: 'I'll settle you at Paddington and run round with the bag. There will be plenty of time. Or, stop—perhaps there won't. You must stay here, in the waiting-room,' and he led her towards it, 'and I'll go after them, see them off, and come back for you. You know we should have had to wait somewhere,' cheerfully.

'Lionel, you—you——' She hesitated and caught his arm.

'What? You don't mind being left?'

'That's not it. It's about Bet. I'm so afraid she thinks already that you——'

'What? What can she think? There's nothing to think.'

'I am sure she is never thinking of it, but he *might* be there.'

'He? Billy?'

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In a moment the speaker was off. 'Drive sharp. A train to catch,' he called to the driver.

But sweet peace was in store. Waterloo Station was in its usual state of turmoil, but for a wonder the familiar figures were instantly discernible on the platform, unattended, evidently in disconsolate consultation. How small they looked! Such little, young things! To think that they should be so stout of heart, so proud and independent! The brother's heart, already softened by tenderness and happiness, yearned towards the two, Bet especially. On a sudden he recollected that he had not kissed her, nor she him, when they parted, and a strange impulse moved him to feel that he would kiss her now—now, before everybody—when he had anew to say 'Good-bye.' She might not like it, might be surprised at it, but he would be happier afterwards, for——there, they saw him! He hastened towards them.

'My bag? Oh, joy!' cried Poll. 'We thought it must have been left in the hansom, and we did not know what to do. Where was it, Lionel?' taking it from him.

'Among our things. I thought I should catch you. Have you got your tickets?'

'Where is Georgie?' said Bet, sharply.

'She's all right. In the waiting-room at Liverpool Street. I'll go back to her now, if you don't need me,' mindful of her warning. 'I'm glad I caught you, Poll. Georgie thought you would be in a way if you did not have your precious bag. Good-bye, then, if you don't need me?' preparing to depart.

'As you *are* here——' said Bet, and stopped.

'Yes, do stop and see us in,' cried her sister. 'It looks nice to have a man with you. And there is such a crowd.'

'All right, I'll see you in,' said he, heartily. And he bustled to find good places, took the number of the luggage van, tipped the porter, reminded his sisters that 'Brockenhurst' was where they changed, and then—and the compartment was full—saluted each as he handed her to her seat.

'What's that for?' muttered Bet to herself. The poor girl was so enraged that she could scarcely breathe. To her view it was a brother's form of thanksgiving for danger escaped; and whether she had herself expected a certain friend to present himself on the occasion or not she was now convinced that others had.

Lionel, however, went off gaily, making easy mention of a successful mission in reply to Georgie's eagerness, and neither

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one nor other entered into details. Poll had rejoiced over her recovered treasure, and he had seen the train depart. All was well, and hurrah! for King's Beacon.

Their journey accomplished there was Leonora's pony carriage at the station. Georgie was sure it was it—saw it from her window—thought it unperceived by her brother, 'and, oh, Lin, that must be their footman!'

'Hush, of course,' said he, quieting her. It was all plain sailing, delight, anticipation now.

In a few minutes the happy party were travelling along a village street, the girls in front, the men behind, the luggage following in a cart; and on they go into the beautifully wooded, open country beyond. Georgie's heart is dancing, Lionel's full with a deeper content. No one thinks of a sad little face wearily gazing from a window far away; Bet's luckless love affair has already receded into the past with these two, and having shut the door upon it they hope never to see nor to hear of it again.

Lord Umfreville says that King's Beacon is one of the finest places in the country, and casts over it already the eye of possession. He has no objection to its owner as an adjunct. A docile girl, tolerable to look at, safe to behave herself. She won't bother him. He has not, so far, made much progress with her, but this he attributes to the keen eyes of Lady Blanche, on the look out for a great match.

'Must square the aunt,' concludes he, having been at pains to discover that there is no other person to be squared.

He met the ladies, be it remembered, on their return from Homburg, and did his best to persuade them then to accept his escort and make a plan together; but that project having failed he had decided to bide his time, take his shooting in the north, and prosecute his suit during the autumn. In the autumn he would have his birds caged safe and sound at King's Beacon, whence they would not escape a siege. We know the rest.

Perhaps Lionel, who had never taken King's Beacon into the consideration he should have done, was a shade daunted by the sweeping avenues and stately pile. Henham was a charming place, secluded, dignified, but it lacked the grandeur of the other. He glanced from side to side as the little pony cart with its pretty pair bowled swiftly along beneath the long arch of limes which nearly met overhead, but stood far back on either side beneath; he noted the extent of undulating park on either side, and the size of the great house beneath whose portico they

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presently drew up. But there was Lady Blanche upon the doorstep, and the warmth of her welcome, the affectionate kiss to Georgie, the clasp of his own hand, what was all the rest?

'Nobody is here,' cried she, smiling round; 'we have got some people coming presently, but we wished to have a few days of you all to ourselves first. By the way, I forgot Bertie.'

Bertie? A pang shot through Lionel's heart. Bertie? Some swell young Guardsman perhaps? Or, worse still, some darling eldest son, beside whom he will feel himself a presumptuous nobody?

Scarce, however, had the terrible thought arisen ere a shy, lurking figure in the background, terribly ill at ease, and the very impersonation of boyish awkwardness, trembles forward and tenders a heavy, warm, newly-washed hand.

'My nephew,' says Lady Blanche, regarding the large creature with the utmost kindliness. Then aside to Lionel, 'He is my brother Downing's youngest son, and only sixteen, though he is such a monster. Outgrown his strength, and is not to go back to Eton. We are taking care of him. He has been looking forward to your coming.'

But Lionel knows better. He knows that the boy's eyes are following him everywhere, taking him in at every point, and making a swift and probably severe summary of his demerits. He knows how he would have felt on a like occasion.

Once, when just the age of this lad, he had been brought into the presence of his cousin Sydney, Sydney Umfreville, his uncle's nephew and heir, and his uncle had tossed the two at each other with a laugh.

'Here's your fellow pup, Syd. Looks as if he had walked a bit away from his skin, doesn't he?'

If Syd, who was three years older, had laughed Lionel would almost have died.

But he never afterwards looked at the coat and trousers that were too small for him without recalling his cousin's cheerful 'Oh, we know all about that, don't we, Lionel? Isn't it a beastly shame that we grow at such a rate between terms? My trousers were always up to my knees at your age;' and how the hearty, sympathetic 'we' had revived his soul.

'I don't care what you say,' he had told his sisters, for they as little girls had not been so favourably impressed with their cousin: 'he's a jolly good sort, and the only one of the lot who ever said a decent word to me.'

Lord Downing's son has not walked away from his clothes, for

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the obvious reason that they are brand new—too new possibly for the wearer's comfort, as sundry jerks and twitches testify; but he has all the self-conscious misery of overgrowth added to natural bashfulness, and it is Lionel who is the easy, polished man of the world in his eyes. He is wondering if this swell will take any notice of him; is prepared to be looked down upon from the heights of the other's superiority. Already on the defensive.

Lionel drops behind the others, and in a tone of perfect equality, which startles Mr. Bertie Whittingham and sends a thrill of delight through his veins, observes, 'I say, those ferrets were for you, weren't they?' accompanying the words with a knowing look.

The ferrets had arrived in a box, and the box had been put into the King's Beacon cart at the station beneath Lionel's eyes.

'Are they—are they come?' A furious blush, but restrained eagerness in the reply.

Lionel nods jovially. 'Is it good ferreting here?'

'Splendid. Do you—do you like ferreting?'

'Awfully. I haven't had any for years. I used to keep them.'

'Did you—*did* you? But, look here, don't say anything to them'—the boy glances towards the feminine trio, half timidly, half contemptuously (already he and Lionel are in league)—'they think it's rot—at least Leonora does. Aunt Blanche knows, but she never lets out. I keep them at the kennels; and the best I had got killed the other day, so I sent for another couple. We'll go and look at them after tea. I say, I'm awfully glad you like ferrets,' with a sigh of satisfaction.

Lady Blanche, glancing round, perceives that there is no further need of her services; and when, later on, there is a perceptible restlessness in her nephew's demeanour, and a sudden dart for Lionel's side on the first opportunity, she herself gives the order for release, having an inkling of what is about to take place.

'Bertie, you will show Mr. Colvin his rooms when you come in? I suppose you are going to have a turn outside now? It is too late for us.'

'And I am going to help Georgie to unpack,' announces Leonora.

'Would you care to send the others a line announcing your safe arrival?' Lady Blanche looks round. But Lionel is already out of hearing, and the girls are hurrying away.

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Georgie does not want to think about 'the others' at present. . . .

Nor were they thinking about her.

A chill mist was spreading over sea and land, obscuring all distant objects, and causing nearer ones to assume odd and fantastic shapes, when Bet and Poll, who had no such hospitable welcome awaiting them at their journey's end as had fallen to the lot of the more favoured two, stepped down from the fly in which they had driven from the landing stage, at the door of their destination.

'Here we are at last!' sighed Poll, with an effort to rouse herself, for during the dull drive both had been gradually sinking into a semi-comatose state; 'how late and cold it is!' shivering as the door opened to admit a draught of air, 'and oh, how tired I am!'

Bet was still more tired, but she did not say so. She busied herself collecting the small articles to be handed out. Also she left it to Poll to return the landlady's greeting, and reply to her suggestion of the flyman's being asked to convey the heavier items upstairs.

When this was done, and she had paid him—overpaid him, but it did not seem worth haggling about—she sank wearily into a chair by the fire, taking no notice of anything.

'Aren't you hungry, Bet?' Poll, whose spirits had revived at sight of a well-spread table, and who had returned from a satisfactory tour of inspection upstairs, had now forgotten her fatigue and was busy rummaging and commenting. 'I think we shall do very well. What a dear little writing table. I am so glad this window overlooks the sea. It is a pity it is such a dreary evening, but I dare say it will be better to-morrow. We needn't unpack to-night, need we? After tea we might go down to the shore—or would you rather not?' with a sudden consciousness of her sister's weary attitude and listless inattention.

Bet said she would go, however.

'It was a dreadful journey,' said Poll, sympathetically. 'Perhaps it is because we have not been in a train for so long, but I thought it never would end. Here we are anyway, and I am so glad we ordered tea instead of dinner. It will be ready this instant, Mary says. The girl's name is Mary.'

Mary now appeared with a laden tea tray.

'What nice-looking scones!' exclaimed Poll, following the proceedings with interest. 'And soles are my favourite fish.

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You might put the eggs in the slop basin, Mary, and pour hot water over them. We like them hard. Oh, we'll cut the bread for ourselves, thank you.'

Ordinarily it would have been Bet who thus took charge and was pat with Mary's name. Bet had the most engaging little ways with lodging-house 'slaveys,' and was never sharp with them, as she was with her sisters. 'They're poor and miserable and can't retaliate,' she would say; but the present Mary took it for granted that Poll was the leader. The other miss took no notice of anything.

By-and-by she suggested in the kitchen that the other miss didn't seem well.

'Not well?' echoed the high-voiced, red-faced mistress of the house. 'What d'ye say, you? We want no sick folks here,' and she hurried into the parlour to see for herself. 'Got everything you want, young ladies?' blandly, casting about with sharp eyes the while.

The sight of the pair seated at table calmly, and, as she thought, contentedly, consuming her victuals sent her back with a scornful reprimand for Mary's officiousness. 'You setting yourself up to give me such a fright! She's as well as you or I.' After a minute she added more placably, 'Tired with travelling, that's all.'

'If you would rather not go out to-night, Bet,' essayed Poll, as, tea finished, Bet, who had left half she took on her plate, sat leaning her head on her hand without evincing any disposition to move, 'don't bother to go because of me. I don't mind.'

'Oh, we may as well go,' said Bet, gathering herself up wearily.

'I know you were packing for Georgie half the night,' continued Poll, who had laid down this rule for herself: that she would not have any 'ructions' on the expedition, to which end she would ignore moods and tempers, to say nothing of an aching heart. 'I dare say you are pretty well tired out. We can sit in the window, and go to bed soon.'

'No. Let us come out.'

'I should like it, but——'

'Come along then;' and they opened the low French window and stepped through. In a few minutes they were alone upon the shore, with grey waves breaking in solemn roll at their feet, and a grey, cold world all round.

'I don't think this is very nice after all,' said Poll, dismally.

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But Bet would not let her go in. Bet preferred the dim solitude and monotonous thud of the waves to the flaring little parlour, and Mary, with possible reappearances of Mary's mistress.

'She'll want to ask about things. She'll come pestering to know if we are comfortable. I can't talk to-night, Poll; I can't. I'm so—tired. Tired of people and things, not tired of walking out here. Come further, come as far as those rocks. Poll, I'm afraid I haven't been very good company to-day. You don't mind, do you? I'm not cross—with you. If you'll agree not to think I am cross because I don't talk——'

'As Georgie does.'

Bet winced. As Georgie did. Precisely. She would never have needed to instruct Georgie and explain to her; but Poll had got to be trained if she were to fill Georgie's place.

'If it's to be we two and they two in future, the sooner we begin the better,' muttered she, 'and she won't have learnt at the end,' feeling sick and sore with all the world.

And then Poll proved she had not learnt. At the slightest breath of encouragement she was all for prattle and discursiveness, not seeing, as Georgie would have done, that a word thrown out here and there meant only a word back. It was still new to her to be Bet's intimate, alone with Bet, at peace while the others were at war with Bet.

All of this was very nice, though rather alarming. She felt that she must rise to the occasion, and make herself agreeable and companionable; poor Bet must be cheered up, not allowed to feel dull and dispirited.

'Come along in,' said Bet at last.

She foresaw that the fortnight at Freshwater was likely to be a long, long fortnight.

With slow steps the pair retraced their way to the house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN THE CAVE ON THE SHORE.

On the third morning there was a letter from Georgie.

Georgie was now so full of the delights and glories of King's Beacon that it was no effort to sit down in Leonora's pretty morning-room, and write at Leonora's table on stamped

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paper a copious outpouring, pleasing her imagination the while with its reception by the eager sisters.

She began with her first glimpse of Leonora, Leonora herself (underlined), at the station. Then followed a minute description of the *lovely* little pony carriage, with the *sweetest* little pair of ponies, whose names were 'Punch' and 'Judy,' with more of the ponies in detail. Next came Lady Blanche's delightful welcome. She was standing outside the great front door waiting for them. She ran down the steps just as she used to do at Henham. In the hall there was a huge, red-headed creature who turned out to be the Hon. Herbert Whittingham, but whom everyone called 'Bertie,' and who could not bear to be called anything else, because he was only a school-boy, though he was mountains high. Lionel and he were tremendous friends already.

Lionel was in great spirits—for him, and had just been in to say that he and Bertie were going out together 'with the dogs,' whatever that meant; but they were *all* going over to Ughtred in the afternoon, as Lady Blanche said they had better go at once, while Lord Umfreville was away.

'I suppose because of him and Leonora,' commented the astute pen with three notes of exclamation.

Lady Blanche had suggested their calling on Aunt Sophia, and asking her to take them through the house. She thought they could hardly go though the house without calling on Aunt Sophia first. The ladies were to drive, and Lionel and Bertie to ride.

King's Beacon was a most *beautiful* place. She had not been outside yet, but Leonora and she had just made a tour of the house; and then followed a description of large rooms and small rooms, galleries and staircases, ending off with the chapel window.

'Because, of course, they will want to hear every single little thing,' explained the simple girl, looking round at the close of her third sheet; and she hung over the last page, which was not quite full, considering if there were anything more wherewith to fill it.

'Have you given them my love?' suggested Leonora. 'Do, please. And say we want to know how they are, and if they had a pleasant journey;' which, to be sure, Georgie had never thought of asking.

There was just room for the message and the inquiry, however, albeit the letter had to be reduced to small print, and 'your

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loving Georgie' was almost illegible; but, anyhow, she had told them *everything*, and now they could imagine it all, and though the unaccustomed fingers ached, and the writer laid down her pen with a sigh, she regarded her labours with complacency.

'In time for the early post, too,' observed she.

Let us follow the letter and witness its reception.

'Well?' said Poll, as Bet after a superficial glance laid it down on the breakfast-table. 'Well? Aren't you going to read it?'

'It will keep. I must have something to eat first. My head aches this morning.'

'May I read it, then?'

'If you like—no, wait. I'll just look through. I don't suppose there is anything that is not for us both, but——' And her eye ran carelessly up and down the sheets. At the close she pushed them towards her sister and lifted the coffee-pot in silence.

'I suppose it is all gush,' said Poll, resignedly. 'Of course we expect that. But I thought Georgie would be sure to write a good letter.'

'Who said it wasn't a good letter?'

'You hardly looked at it.'

Bet said nothing.

'Well, it is; a very good letter,' pronounced Poll, having laughed through every page. 'What a funny boy that Bertie must be, with his hoarse voice, and his "underground comments" on the conversation! Georgie and he will hit it off exactly, but it is rather wonderful that Lionel takes to him.'

'Not at all wonderful—in the Massiturs' house.'

'That's it, of course. And she says he hangs on Lionel's lips, and called him "Sir" once, and then blushed till he was blue. Fancy their going to Ughtred, Bet!'

'We knew they were to go there.'

'To call on Aunt Sophia. How she will stare when Georgie walks in, in Lady Blanche's wake! And Lionel will look quite splendid on horseback. Isn't it a blessing he took those riding lessons in the spring? When we go——'

'Oh, stop. You can talk about it afterwards. Let us have our breakfast now.'

'But you are not eating your breakfast, you are only playing with it. Is anything the matter?'

'No—no—*no*.'

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Nothing was the matter, of course not. Georgie was just Georgie; a child, a spoilt child; 'out of sight out of mind' with her; her own present everything, other people's nothing.

Bet had in reality yearned for this first letter, feeling sure there must be in it some little cry of love and helplessness. She was herself so young and unversed in human nature that the gay narrative, with its over-brimming joyousness and blatant prosperity, struck her a cruel blow. Thrown upon her less beloved and congenial sister for companionship, she had in thought reverted again and again to the perfect unanimity of spirit which had ever prevailed between her and the other, and contrasted nearly everything Poll did with what Georgie would have done.

Georgie must be feeling the same. A cloud had arisen between the two of late; but away from each other, in a strange place, with only Leonora for a confidante, surely, surely, she would miss her Bet?

When Bet was by herself she read every word of the letter afresh, and her face hardened as she set it down.

One day she said to Poll, sharply: 'Why do we never talk of Billy? Neither of us have mentioned his name since we came here.'

Poor Pollkins was so startled that she nearly had a fit. Mention Billy's name? It was the last thing she would have thought of doing.

'Well, why?' repeated Bet. 'I suppose there is no reason. And we used to talk about him enough, Heaven knows.'

'I'll—I'll talk now, if you like,' stammered Poll, feebly.

'That's not it. Of course you'll talk if I talk. What I want to know is why he is to be treated so. What has he done that he is tabooed like a criminal?'

'To be sure. What—what has he done?'

'Don't giggle. Answer me.'

'I'm going to answer you; I'm only thinking.' Then with a sudden inspiration: 'There was something I always wanted to ask about Billy, only I never liked to do it,' blundered she, 'as you never spoke of him——'

'Good gracious, do you always need me to speak of people before you can say "Boo" to them? Get on, then. What did you want to ask?'

'About that day at the brook. Did you ever find out about it?'

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'Do you mean why he did not speak to us? It was for the simplest reason imaginable, only we were such fools——'

('It was you who were the fool,' from Poll, *sotto voce.*)

'We might have known he would think nothing of it; nothing derogatory to us I mean. He said it was a picture worthy of a painter,' and for a moment a softer look stole over the fair, frowning face. 'He called us water-nymphs at play.'

'Why did he not speak to the water-nymphs?'

'He was not in a fit state to present himself at their shrine.' Evidently she was repeating words which had sung like music in her ear. 'He was a mere mortal, and a very hot and dusty and dishevelled mortal too.'

'And tired, I dare say,' observed Poll, hitting the mark. 'It was a hot day—the hottest we had. And that was all. And we thought all sorts of ridiculous things about him!'

'Not more ridiculous than other things that have been thought since,' said Bet, bitterly. And the subject collapsed as though struck by lightning.

'I do hope she won't ask me again why I don't talk about him,' meditated Poll, when she had time to breathe and consider. 'It is so very uncomfortable. And what can I say? I only get snapped up whatever I say. Besides, Lionel and Georgie said the best thing I could do was to hold my tongue. So I get dropped on both ways,' feeling justifiably aggrieved.

The days dragged. They had not provided themselves with books, and the weather was not such as to allow of outdoor sketching, with which one of the two at least could have amused herself. Even when Poll did take her place in the window with her block and colour-box she was uneasily conscious of a motionless figure in the room, a listless, unoccupied figure, watching with lack-lustre eyes.

She had proffered a sheet of her drawing-paper and the use of her materials, but they had been moodily rejected.

'No, thank you. I don't feel inclined.'

She had suggested the Village Library. 'Suppose we see what they have got, Bet?'

'They won't have anything.'

'We might try.'

Bet shrugged her shoulders.

Sometimes Bet went out alone. She liked it, she said. Poll, going to look for her sister on one occasion, found her far away upon the downs, where she would not have thought of looking for

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anyone, had she not caught a glimpse of a figure against the sky-line.

'I was on my way home,' said Bet. 'I did not mean to come so far, but I forgot the time. It is all right. I often come this way. I never meet anyone.'

Another day:

'Here is a letter from Georgie,' said Poll, having followed from afar. 'It came by the afternoon post, and I thought I might as well bring it out. I dare say they will say something about coming home now. Well, do they?' she inquired after Bet had read a few lines.

Bet made an impatient movement.

'They have nearly had their fortnight,' hinted Poll, to whom the fortnight had seemed a month.

'Lady Blanche wishes them to stay on. They will if we will. They seem to wish it.'

'But they were coming here?'

'I never thought they would if they were asked on. And now they are asked on. Georgie wants to know what we think.'

'What *you* think? They wouldn't ask *me*.'

'And do you suppose they ask me? It is only a form. They mean to stay, of course.'

'Well, you wouldn't order them back, Bet.' Poll made an effort to be light and easy. 'They know that. Let them have their fling. We needn't stay on here unless you like,' she subjoined, timidly.

'I suppose we may as well be here as anywhere else. Do you want to see the letter?'

The letter, albeit not quite so brilliant and discursive as the original of the series, was nevertheless an entertaining record of daily doings, starting from the point reached at the period of the latest despatch.

'You remember I told you about the people who were coming? We were rather afraid of them, Lin and I, but they have turned out awfully nice. There is a father and mother and two girls. The father is so like Mr. Tom Farrell, only not vulgar; but he sticks his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, and puffs and blows *exactly* like old Tom. I can't think how he does it without being vulgar, which he isn't, not in the *very least*. The mother is as stout as he—not at all like Mrs. Tom——'

'Can't she let the Farrells alone?' muttered Bet, beneath her breath.

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'Then there are the girls, Helen and Dolly. They are regular country girls, up to anything, just like us. I told them about us, and they would like to know you and Poll awfully. They shriek with laughter over our jokes. I forgot to say that they are "Lady Helen" and "Lady Dorothy"—the parents are the Downings, Lady Blanche's brother and his wife—Bertie's father and mother. He is a good deal younger than Lady Blanche, and only succeeded because her two elder brothers died off. So I don't suppose he knew anything about father; and I'm sure if he had he would never have been nasty about it. He used to be a sailor, and that is why he is so bluff and jolly——'

'What a lot about nothing!' muttered Bet again. 'What does it matter if he was a sailor or a tailor? That child's head is quite turned.'

'But it does matter a little, Bet, because of Lionel.'

'I think Lionel is preparing great misery for himself,' said Bet, more gently. 'He won't be warned. And he does not know, he cannot guess what it is like. He ought never to have gone to King's Beacon. And they are leading him on, and he does not *know*.'

She shuddered and looked away over the moaning headland with fixed, far-seeing eyes.

'I dare say it will come to nothing, Bet.' Poll, after a minute's silence, ventured her mite of consolation.

'Just what I say. It will come to nothing. I know it. I am sure of it.'

'But I mean it will die out of itself. If he sees that it is of no use his thinking of Leonora, and that she is never thinking of him, he has too much sense and pride——'

'Sense and pride?' Bet brought her large eyes back to her sister's face. She could not proceed, could not say what was in her heart—namely, that neither sense nor pride had done anything for her. 'I only hope it will be over soon,' she sighed. 'Every day I have been thinking "One day less," and hoping this wretched visit may pass off without——'

'You did not think he was going to say anything, Bet?' In spite of herself, excitement thrilled Poll's accents. Did you? Did you really? Why, dear me, I never dreamed of that.'

'I thought it was possible, more than possible. He has made great strides already, and everyone can see how he feels.'

'Dear me! Our Lionel!'

'And now they are making him stay on,' proceeded Bet, as though her unfortunate brother were being lured to his doom,

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'And we can do nothing to prevent it. And here is Uncle Umfreville appearing on the scene,' turning to her letter again, and reading aloud:

'"Who do you suppose has been here each day since I wrote last? Uncle Umph—'the wicked uncle'—as Leonora and I call him. And I assure you he looks the part at Lin and me, and simply hates to find us here. He addresses Lin in the most disgustingly contemptuous manner, and says the rudest things when there is nothing to be rude about. But he got it back once, and I must tell you how. He had been sneering as usual, when something was said about Lionel's shooting, and Bertie, who, you know, is Lionel's sworn ally, turned round on him, and to everybody's amazement said, in the haughtiest voice: 'If you please, I do know something about shooting, and if your keepers stuff it into you that your nephew doesn't, tell them from me that I'd back him against any one of them, or our men here either. And I'd lay long odds, too. If you will do us the honour of coming to shoot with us yourself, I'll back him against you too.' Us the honour! But Lady Blanche looked delighted, and Umph most thoroughly put out. He tried to carry it off with a laugh, but he was as red as fire. Afterwards we all pretended to scold Bertie, but everybody was simply ready to do anything for him, and Leonora gave him a little picture she knew he was fond of, in the evening. Wasn't it fine? Leonora cannot *bear* Umph. She will hardly go into the drawing-room when he is there, and tries to make Lady Blanche quarrel with him. Lady Blanche only laughs; but I am sure she agrees in her heart. She is kinder than ever to Lionel. And I think she must have told Lord Downing about him, for he looked so knowing one day, and said that it was rather wonderful Bertie should be so devoted to Lionel considering that he was an old worshipper of Leonora's. He said it laughingly to Lionel when they were alone in the hall, but I was above, and I heard. One day Bertie said to me: 'What a brick your brother is! I wish he was my brother.' Lady Blanche was there, and she turned round and smiled at him."'

'There, you see, they are all leading him on!' cried Bet, having finished. 'Flattering and fooling him. But if he says, "Let me marry Leonora," they will hold up their hands in horror, and be "so sorry," but they had "never thought of it."'

'I don't quite see what they have to gain, however,' said Poll, with a flash of shrewd common-sense.

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To which Bet, as was her wont when nonplussed, vouchsafed no reply. She could hardly accuse people like the Massiturs and Downings of rapacity for conquest, and it was they and not Leonora who were guilty in her eyes. 'I don't understand it,' she was fain to tell herself at last.

And the next morning brought what was a rare thing, a letter from Lionel himself. Not to announce his engagement, as for one startled moment the sisters half expected, but to tell of his change of plans, of Lady Blanche's insistence, and his own willingness to yield thereto. Happiness and hope breathed in every line.

It was annoying that their uncle should have turned up when wanted by nobody, and he for ever forcing his presence on 'our jolly little party,' wrote he; 'but though he thinks himself a favourite in a certain quarter, he is very far mistaken. Georgie knows all about it.'

Uncle Umph disposed of, 'What do you propose for yourselves?' wrote Lionel. 'If Freshwater suits you, why not stay on? If you would rather move somewhere else, or go home, you have only yourselves to please. Shall I send you some more money?'

'Don't you think we had better stay on?' said Poll, having read.

'Another whole week?' said Bet, drearily.

In the end, however, she implied her consent by abstaining from any remark when household arrangements were being entered into with a taking-of-the-future-for-granted creditable to a landlady's acumen; and Poll, who was getting interested in a drawing she had begun on a larger scale than usual, was relieved to find that it was not to be left for all time minus a foreground.

A few more days passed.

It was a grey autumnal afternoon, with a low whistle of the wind among the cliffs, and a steady rush of the waters along the shore, when Bet, rising from her seat in the window, whence she had been gazing vacantly out for some time, left the room to put on her hat and cloak upstairs.

'I shan't go far,' she said, opening the door presently. 'You needn't come after me unless you like. I suppose you would rather stop in and get on with your drawing?'

'I do want to finish it,' owned Poll, 'and it does not look very inviting out. I believe it is going to rain'—glad of an excuse.

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'No. The wind is too high. But it is soft and warm. I put my head out just now. However, if you would rather not come——?'

'I would, Bet.'

Bet vanished.

She had a favourite haunt upon the shore, to which she now directed her steps, and though it was only at the end of the little bay, where as a rule plenty of people were about, poking and picking among the rocks, on this occasion it was deserted, and she sat down with that tired feeling, from which she was now seldom free, to let her eyes wander idly round the solitude.

It was always a relief to be alone with her thoughts. They were not particularly happy ones, but she could at least have her way with them without let or hindrance. She could decide and adjudge without the tiresome 'Are you sure about that? Do you think that could not be read two ways?' so disturbing to the mind already made up.

Even had Bet been in accord with her sisters on the subject now all in all to her, there would still have been infinite food for solitary musings; but, debarred from girlish confidences, love in all its lighter phases, as well as in its deep and hidden communings, must be dwelt upon, considered, and reconsidered within the confines of her own breast.

This insensibly wore her out. There was no relief, no outlet.

And Poll's tattle of King's Beacon, interspersed with anecdotes of Mary the maid, and Mary's mistress, who bullied her, though she was all smiles to them, was sometimes so fretting as to be intolerable.

Poll little guessed why she was set down to a new drawing the moment she had finished an old one; nor why Bet preferred those done from the window of their little sitting-room to any others.

On the present afternoon the latter experienced an increased restlessness and impatience of poor Poll, resulting from a whole wet morning's confinement in the house, wherefore the break in the clouds which let her out later was more than usually welcome.

She sat down, as we have said, on a favourite boulder, and watched mechanically the gulls wading in the sea-pools round. The tide was out, and the great Stag Rock was well-nigh naked to its base. In and out of its arched comrade the birds flew. A cormorant came sailing along. Then a flock of little divers alit upon the glistening sands, and skurried this way and that.

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Suddenly, and as if for no apparent reason, the scene changed; the sky, which had been blue behind drifting rain-clouds, veiled over, and a dank sea-mist enveloped the shore; bird life departed; a heavy silence settled over all; Bet shivered where she sat.

And though her reverie had been short, she awoke from it as recalled by a new and strange sensation.

It was not fear, it was a gathering excitement which stole into her veins.

Something was about to happen.

Something—or some one was near.

The sound of a pebble falling at her back made her start and tremble from head to foot. What was it? Who was it? She durst not turn her head to look.

Closer crept the clinging mist, and the huge rocks in front took weird and fantastic shapes before her eyes, emerging and disappearing at intervals. The tide had crawled out to its furthest. There was no sea.

And now again that small, sharp sound, followed by a step, yes, certainly a step upon the shingle.

Anew she shivers, gathering her cloak around her; her pulses are beating fast, her limbs are powerless, she can scarce suppress a scream when the approaching presence, making itself felt though unseen, stops—stops behind, out of sight. Who is it? *Who* is it?

With scarcely a feint of ordinary salutation, William Farrell takes her hand and retains it. 'I am in great trouble, Bet.'

Would she not have known he was in trouble? He who in general is so erect and gay droops before her like an old man; the light has gone out of his eye; his very voice is changed.

Yet, oh, to think of it!—it is to her he has flown in his distress, and, whatever its nature may be, it has this merit, it has unsealed his lips at last! In a few minutes she has learned thus much.

'And you have loved me all the time?' she cries. The misty headland seems to swim around her.

He pours forth—loved her? Of course he has loved her. She knew that, surely? She understood him? Yes, he had relied on her understanding; also on her faith and constancy. 'And I had made up my mind to throw prudence and discretion to the winds,' proceeded he. 'I was about to follow you here, as I think you knew I would, when—how shall I say it? I learned, learned only this morning something that changed the face of everything. Nothing can change our love, of course,' as she made a faint, in-

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voluntary protest; 'but what would you say if I had to ask such a proof of it—no, no; I can't do it, I can't do it,' with mournful, steadfast decision.

'Do what?' murmured she.

He sighed deeply.

'Tell me,' she murmured again.

'I will tell; you know my poor brother Charles? He has always been more or less a charge upon our hands, a blunderer and a squanderer, in plain terms. *That* we have been habituated to all our lives, but we little thought that he—however, even yet he may be saved, and it is to shelter his good name that I—that every effort must be made. If your brother, Bet, were in the eyes of the world a rogue and a swindler, yet if you knew that it was more through weak foolishness he had sinned than anything else, would not you do everything that lay in your power to give him another chance? I know you would. You would not regard trouble and expense, and—worse.'

She murmured assent.

'Do you know what the "worse" means? Parting from you. Yes, it is *that* which is intolerable, unendurable. Yet parted we must be for a long, a weary time, unless—and it is that which tempts me, Bet, almost more than I can bear.' His voice sank to a breathless whisper.

'What is the "unless?"' whispered she, in return.

'Unless you would go with me.'

Go with him? Was that all? She almost laughed out. Go with him? Of course she would go with him anywhere, everywhere, to the ends of the earth if need be. He had not said where, but where mattered nothing. What did matter was that he should be instantly relieved of this preying anxiety, and accordingly, 'You think I would not go?' said she, with a happy little laugh—'ask me.'

'Will you—will you indeed, Bet?' A fiery eagerness, but he restrained himself. 'Do not promise too hastily. Hush! listen to me. I have to leave this country at once, secretly; my going unknown to all, even to Charles himself; and I may have to be gone a long time, I cannot say how long. It would all depend on what there is to do and how it can be done. Of course, if it had been an open piece of business, a few weeks might have been the limit, but when a man has to work as it were in the dark, every other consideration must be sacrificed. Do you understand me? We might have to be gone a long time.'

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'I don't quite understand. At least, oh yes, I understand that part. That is nothing. I would stay as long as you chose without a word; of course I would. But,' she hesitated, 'you said "at once." Did you mean—what did you mean? You see, Lionel is not here.'

'And Lionel must not know,' said he, steadily. 'Did I not tell you I was in trouble, Bet? That is my chief trouble. No one must know, for Charles' sake. Once it got out, all hope of saving my poor brother from a terrible exposure, and more, which I need not enter upon, would be gone for ever.'

'But Lionel——'

'Would be silent, of course. But how could I expose Charles to him and not to my brother Thomas, or to my cousin Stephen, both partners in the bank, both with a right to know? Lionel is a mere boy beside them, and, besides'—he paused, then continued in tremulous accents—'besides, what if he said "No"? He has a right, has he not, to prevent your marriage, if he objects to it?'

'He has no right. I am of age. I am twenty-three.'

'So old?' He smiled tenderly. 'Such a great age, Bet? You look about sixteen. Well, then,' continued he, reverting to seriousness; 'it rests with you, and your brother's presence or absence is unimportant. But what am I saying? I have allowed myself to hope, and I ought to have no hope. You could not do it, it is too great a sacrifice.'

'Tell me,' said Bet, in clear rising accents, 'what the "sacrifice" is. Tell me very plainly, please, and then you will see for yourself whether or not I am capable of making it.'

Her cheek was burning, her veins throbbing as she spoke. He was sure of her now.

'When I leave this place,' he said, taking both her hands in his, 'I go direct to Liverpool and embark to-morrow afternoon for America. My business lies on the other side of America. I want you to be married to me—oh, it is a shame to ask it!—at a registrar's office, either in London or Liverpool; and to accompany me on this sad, miserable journey, as its one gleam of hope and consolation. Do not suppose we would keep your brother and sisters in ignorance,' he ran on rapidly. 'They should know all about that part of the business the moment it was accomplished; we would wire from the landing stage—yes, Liverpool would be the best place, the registrar's office is close by—and you could write from Queenstown. We would spare them all needless

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anxiety; but a little anxiety, I fear, dear Bet, there must be. We *must not* tell anyone beforehand. That is, if you consent, if you can bring yourself to consent?' He scanned her face eagerly.

She was flushing and paling in the twilight.

'I know it is a great thing to ask; I know it is more than I ought to ask,' murmured he, as if daunted by her air; 'but if I leave you behind I have a presentiment—it is easy to laugh at presentiments till one's own turn comes—I have it and cannot rid myself of it, that we should never be again to each other what we are now. We *think* we should,' reading incredibility in a motion of her head; 'but, dear Bet, I know the world. I know what would happen. Those about you would say: "Why did he not speak out before? Why did he leave it to the last moment?" I say so now myself. Fool, fool that I was not to have made my happiness secure when I had the chance. Fool to have thought so much of a little discouragement most natural under the circumstances, but most unfortunate as it now turns out. If your brother and sisters had only been kinder, if we had understood each other better, I might have been able to bear up under a separation, but now I cannot—I cannot.' His head sank upon his breast.

Suddenly he started afresh: 'What am I saying? Of course I can, and I must. You have allowed me to hope, but I ought not to have accepted hope from a child like you. How could I be so cruel? And you, you have always trusted me; others have been cold and suspicious, but you are above every form of littleness. That is what I have said to myself over and over when aghast at my own presumption. I have said: "It will seem nothing to her magnanimity. Already she has had so much to bear on my account, she will not grudge a little more."

'Thus I tried to cheer my heart. But when you saw me, Bet, just now, I was at my blackest. I was simply in despair, and had just decided to give all up and go off without invading your peace, when I looked up, and beheld yourself—your dear, true, noble self—before me! . . .'

'Can you wonder that I broke down?' cried he, passionately. 'Would not any man have broken through his guard under such provocation? You, sweet, artless girl, all unconsciously cut away the ground from under my feet; I had no more strength left in me. And now, Bet—my brave, noble, generous-minded Bet?'

(To be continued.)

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English Midshipmen and French Prisons, 1807.

WHEN Peter Simple, of famous memory, first found himself a prisoner in the hands of the French, his friend and fellow-captive, O'Brien, consoled him by remarking that 'the life of a man consists of getting into scrapes and getting out of them again. We've managed the first,' he added, 'and by the blessing of God we'll manage the second also.' Which admirable sentiment no doubt expressed the feelings of scores of young naval officers in the same position, some of whom showed no less ingenuity and courage than Lieutenant O'Brien in extricating themselves from it. It is not long since a distinguished newspaper correspondent, not connected with the naval profession, proved that a capacity for 'getting out of scrapes' is by no means extinct among us; and there may be some interest in comparing the recently-published account of his adventures with the narrative of a somewhat similar escape, written before the days of 'enterprising' journalism.

Captain Edward Boys, R.N., a 'Man of Kent,' is often supposed to have afforded the materials for Peter Simple's escape from Givet by the account, which he wrote in 1810, of his own escape from Valenciennes, with three companions. There are many records of such exploits during the great French war. Some are written by naval officers of no special distinction; they are mostly without literary merit; yet they are valuable as presenting types of the men who, more than all others, maintained the fortunes of England in that time of need.

At the time he was taken prisoner (July 1803) Edward Boys was a midshipman on board the *Phœbe* frigate. He left his home at Betshanger, near Sandwich, in 1797, and served in the *Royal Sovereign* during the war which ended in the spring of 1802; so that, although his exact age is not stated, he was probably from eighteen to twenty years old. The circumstances of his capture

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might have come straight from Marryat. He had been placed in command of a merchant prize of the *Phœbe*, with orders to proceed immediately to Catalonia and join Lord Nelson in the *Victory*. Early on the day after these instructions had been received, four French frigates, the *Cornélie*, *Rhin*, *Uranie*, and *Tamise*, bore down upon the *Phœbe* and her helpless prize. At the same time the *Redbridge*, schooner, convoying a transport, was sighted, 'and,' says Mr. Midshipman Boys, 'her lieutenant recommended my tacking and following him' (the *Phœbe* was already at some distance); 'but as I saw that by so doing I should be running into the teeth of the enemy, and infallibly be taken in a quarter of an hour, I preferred executing my captain's orders by keeping my station as long as I could. . . . Notwithstanding all our efforts, the enemy was rapidly gaining both on myself and on the *Phœbe*, and escape appeared impossible.' To offer resistance on his own account—a damaged merchant vessel against a fully armed frigate—was out of the question for the young officer in charge. All he could do was to delay the enemy, and that he at once attempted by 'running the vessel athwart hawse of the headmost.' In this he partially succeeded. 'Our rigging,' he says, 'just cleared the main chains of the frigate, which immediately hove to and sent a boat to take possession. . . . Thus, notwithstanding I was myself a prisoner, I could not but indulge in feelings of triumph at seeing the *Phœbe* walk off in the face of a superior and much faster sailing foe.'

Apart from this disinterested consolation, Boys' prospects must have seemed cheerless enough. Here, just at the outset of the war, when he was on the eve of promotion and about to join Lord Nelson in the *Victory*, he found himself cut off from all hope of distinction, condemned to a period of forced inactivity which might, and in fact did, extend over several years. No wonder that, to a young and energetic officer, any honourable death was better than such an existence. O'Brien's view of the situation was the only one possible under the circumstances.

Boys had several companions in misfortune of his own official standing. Whitehurst and Murray were taken prisoners with him, and at Verdun, where they were kept on parole with officers of all ranks, they fraternised with some dozen others, two of whom afterwards joined Boys' escape. At Verdun they remained four years—from 1803 to 1807—years that must have seemed interminable in the monotony of the prisoners' lives; while 'every morning brought a noble chance, and every chance brought out a

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noble knight' in the life they had left. News reached them from time to time of England's triumphs at sea; but the rules applying to *détenus* allowed no hope of an exchange.

It is impossible to say how long this state of things might have continued but for an occurrence which was certainly discreditable in itself, though it produced some desirable results. Three of the midshipmen were taken in the act of violating parole. How it happened, or who the culprits were, is not stated, since it must evidently have been a painful subject with their companions; but the Governor, who seems to have been eager to rid himself of his responsibilities, 'took the opportunity of representing the whole class to the Minister of War as contumacious and refractory. He further assured his Excellency that nothing but extreme rigour and close confinement could insure the persons of these *très mauvais sujets*.' The prisoners were forthwith divided into two detachments; one destined for Valenciennes and Givet, and the other for Sarrelouis and the eastern depôts, and despatched to their destinations under a strong guard.

The new *régime* was one of considerable severity. It had, however, one feature which compensated for all hardships. This was the withdrawal of parole. From the moment this was effected the thought of escape was uppermost in the mind of every prisoner, and especially in the case of the midshipmen.

Boys was one of the foremost among them. Twice his carefully prepared schemes were baulked by the unexpected failure of the companions he had chosen; then suspicions were aroused and had to be quieted before any further attempt could be made. A petition was therefore drawn up by some of the midshipmen and forwarded to the Minister of War, requesting their restoration to parole, and concluding with this charmingly bombastic sentence: 'Such is the character of the British officer that his *parole d'honneur* will better secure his person than *locks*, *bolts*, and *fortresses*.' The document was purposely worded so as to insure denial, and 'I was delighted to learn,' writes the British officer in question, 'that the Minister's answer was confined to a simple negative; hence it became a point of honour with his Majesty's midshipmen to prove the fact.' The adventurous party was at first to consist of three—Whitehurst, Hunter, and Boys. A fourth, chosen some time later, was Mansell, 'a delicate and high-spirited youth about eighteen years of age,' to whom Whitehurst communicated the scheme on the eve of their departure, and who asked nothing better than to join.

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No time was lost in again making ready for a start. The new scheme was that of 'getting into the upper citadel, which could only be effected by creeping upon the parapet above the north gate, letting ourselves down upon the bridge over the canal, and passing through the ravelin.' So much they knew; what they did not know was how many other obstacles they might have to encounter, as they had not had any opportunity of studying the construction of the upper citadel. Fortunately Edward Boys was a young man of resource. 'Hearing,' he says, 'that part of the fortifications abounded in wild rabbits, my greyhounds' (they had been allowed to keep dogs at Verdun) 'were offered to one of the gendarmes whenever he chose to make use of them. And the fellow mentioned it to the "*maréchal de logis*," who was equally pleased, for they verily believed that such beautiful English dogs could kill every rabbit they saw. Shortly afterwards the gendarme came, with the keys in his hand, for them, the "maréchal de logis" waiting at the gate. The dogs, however, had been taught to follow no one but their master, so that their refusing to go afforded me an opportunity of making an offer to accompany them, which was immediately accepted.' Whitehurst and Hunter, with four gendarmes in attendance, were allowed to join the party. 'We took different directions round the ramparts, kicking the grass under the pretence of looking for rabbits; few were found, and none killed . . . but we returned fully satisfied of the practicability of escape, though the difficulties we had to encounter were to scale a wall, to ascend the parapet unseen, to escape the observation of three or four sentinels and the patrols, to descend two ramparts of about forty-five feet each, to force two large locks, and to get over two drawbridges. These were not more than we expected, and we therefore prepared accordingly.'

By various slight subterfuges two ropes and two pick-locks were procured, and the final touch to the preparation was a letter to the commandant, which they left behind them, thanking him for his civilities, and quoting the before-mentioned sentiment with regard to '*locks*, *bolts*, and *fortresses*.' Judging by the number of times that this phrase is referred to, it must have given peculiar delight to its originators.

At half-past seven on the evening of November 16 the four companions assembled for the start. They had arranged for Boys and Hunter to go first, the other two following a quarter of an hour later. The description is best given in Boys' own words:

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'It was now blowing very fresh, and was so dark and cloudy that not a star could be seen; the leaves were falling, and kept up a constant rustling noise, particularly favourable to the enterprise. At half-past eight Hunter and I, with woollen stockings over our shoes, and each having a rope, a small poker or stake, and a knapsack, took leave of our friends, and departed. We first went into the back-yard, got over the wall, passed through the garden and palisades, crossed the road, and climbed silently upon our hands and knees up the bank at the back of the north guard-room, lying still as the sentinels approached, and as they receded again advancing, until we reached the parapet over the gateway leading to the upper citadel. Here the breastwork over which we had to creep was about five feet high and fourteen thick. With the utmost precaution we crept upon the summit, and down the breastwork towards the outer edge of the rampart. Both the poker and stake were then driven into the ground—('by rising and falling with my whole weight.' Boys says, 'I hammered them in with my chest')—and the well-rope made fast. 'This done, we gently let the rope down through one of the grooves in the rampart . . . I then cautiously descended this half-chimney, as it were, by the rope; when I had reached about two-thirds of the way down, part of a brick fell, but I luckily caught it between my knees, and carried it down without noise.'

When Hunter had also come down successfully, they crossed the drawbridge, and found themselves in an arched passage, ending in the massive door which separated them from the upper citadel. This was the moment for the pick-locks to be proved, and, to the dismay of their owners, they were tried in vain. Filing the bolt was useless, for it was of cast-iron; and the stone in which the bolt was fastened was so fortified with bars of iron that it could not be cut out. 'It now appeared complete checkmate. In the midst of our consultation it occurred to me that it would be possible to undermine the gate,' the same plan, it will be remembered, as that adopted by Peter Simple and O'Brien, whose proceedings certainly do bear a very close resemblance to those of Boys and his companions at this point. The undermining must at first have been a most disheartening labour, for they had no implements but pocket-knives, and the paving-stones under the gate were about ten inches square, closely bound together. 'About a quarter of an hour had been thus employed when we were alarmed by a sudden noise, similar to the distant report of a gun . . . as the sound became fainter, it resembled the cautious open-

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ing of the great gate, creating the belief that we were discovered.' For a moment all seemed lost. Stories, only too true, of the barbarous treatment of fugitives had often reached Valenciennes, and it was well known that to be overtaken meant a horrible death. Suddenly there was a faint sound of footsteps in the passage, and almost at the same time Boys heard his name whispered by Whitehurst. 'In an instant,' he tells us, 'all was hope and joy. Reinforced by our two friends, we again returned to our work of mining with as much cheerfulness and confidence as though already embarked for England.' The noise they heard had been caused by Mansell's dropping a knapsack upon the hollow echoing bridge. It had been a narrow escape, but Whitehurst, with great presence of mind, had remained perfectly still on the outer side of the gate on to the bridge, while he heard the sentinel walk up and examine the inner side. The fugitive and the soldier were scarcely more than a yard apart at the time, and the slightest movement would have been fatal.

At half-past ten the first stone was raised, and half an hour later there was a hole large enough to creep through. The first and the second drawbridge they crossed on the *garde-fous*, or iron hand-rails, and thus gained the upper citadel. 'We proceeded to the north-east corner, fixed a stake and fastened a rope upon the breastwork for the fourth and last descent. As I was getting down, with my chest against the edge of the parapet, the stake gave way. Whitehurst, who was sitting by it, snatched hold of the rope, and Mansell of his coat, whilst I endeavoured to grasp the grass, by which I was saved from a fall of about fifty feet. . . . We all got down safe with our knapsacks, except Whitehurst, who, from placing his feet against the rampart and not letting them slip so fast as his hands, got himself in nearly an horizontal position. Seeing his danger, I seized the rope and placed myself under it; he fell upon my arm and shoulder with a violent shock; fortunately neither of us was hurt, but it is somewhat remarkable that within the lapse of a few minutes we preserved each other from probable destruction.' This fourth descent had landed them fairly outside the fortress; it was a supreme moment, and we are not surprised to learn that 'in the excess of joy,' like true Britons, they 'all shook hands.'

To escape from a citadel like that of Valenciennes was no mean achievement, but Boys and his friends soon found that to get out of prison was one thing, and to leave the enemy's country was another. The weather was unfavourable. For three or four

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days it rained incessantly, and as they did not, of course, venture to take shelter under any roof, they suffered more from exposure than from risk of being retaken. One or two alarms they had, as when, between Courtray and Deynse, they travelled part of the way on a dark evening actually accompanied by two gendarmes, who took them for *conscrits*; and on the same road, when they ventured into a public house, a drunken labourer suddenly denounced them as deserters, thereby attracting attention to the four companions in a most undesirable way. Fortunately the landlord kept the peace, and the travellers took to the road again, tired and footsore as they were. The next day was Sunday, the first since they had left Valenciennes, and as one prayer-book (Whitehurst's) was forthcoming, they read prayers in a wood, and 'offered up our humble thanksgivings for deliverance from the hand of the enemy.'

Their ultimate destination was Blankenberg, a small village on the coast, a few miles east of Ostend. They reached Bruges in safety, but constant exposure to cold and wet was telling on them severely; for since they started from Valenciennes, nearly a fortnight before, it had only ceased raining for one day, and they had not spent a single night under shelter. A doleful party they were as they assembled to hold a council of war in a thicket outside the town, 'wet to the skin . . . our feet so lacerated we could scarcely walk,' and nothing approaching to a whole pair of shoes between them. Still the risk of delay was more dangerous than any hardships, and they pushed on towards the coast.

Another wet night and they continued their route at daybreak. And now, when circumstances seemed to have conspired against them, the four travellers were surprised by a really providential piece of good fortune. 'Passing by a solitary public house,' Boys' narrative relates, 'Hunter and I entered for the purpose of purchasing provisions to take on board any boat we might be able to seize. We asked for gin. The woman of the house rose and stared at us, apparently alarmed at our appearance; we repeated our demand without obtaining any reply; still gazing for a few seconds, regardless of our request, she rapturously exclaimed, "*Mon Dieu, ce sont des Anglais!*" Somewhat disconcerted at this unexpected reception, we again asked for gin, to which she replied, "Take seats, and you shall have whatever my house can afford."' In spite of this hospitality Boys and Hunter were still on their guard; they ignored the imputation of being *des Anglais*, and refused to sit down, representing themselves as *conscrits*. But

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their hostess only laughed at the idea. She assured them no one should enter the house while they were in it, fastened the door and windows and began to prepare food for them—talking all the while of nothing but her dear English, and dwelling particularly on the happiness of her former life when in the service of an English family. She tried every means to prevail on them to stay, but they would not be persuaded, in spite of her assurances that they would find it impossible to get off from Blankenberg that night—they did not even allow themselves to be, as she supposed, absconding prisoners. The coast was now only four miles distant, and the little party continued their march with renewed energy. 'We stopped occasionally,' Boys writes, with unconscious pathos, 'to listen with delight to the pleasing monotony of the waves rolling over the beach, which, as we approached, created feelings of enjoyment I had never before experienced. . . . Finding a footpath leading over the sandbank we ran down to the sea, forgetting our wounds, and exulting as though the summit of our wishes were attained. Indeed, so exquisite was the delight that we dashed into the water, drank of it and splashed about. . . . Nor will these feelings create surprise when it is recollected that more than five years had elapsed since we last quitted the sea in the Mediterranean.'

Human nature had evidently not changed much since Xenophon's soldiers saluted the sea on a like occasion, though our midshipmen did not, like the Greeks, find it necessary to express their feelings by means of tears and embraces.

Only too soon they realised that their friend of the wayside inn was right, and that the tides made it impossible for any boat to leave the flat, sandy shore of Blankenberg that night. It proved eventually to be many weeks before their hopes were fulfilled. A fishing smack was the only craft obtainable, and the coast was strictly guarded, so that there were endless dangers of betrayal to be reckoned with, besides the fact that at that time of year there were many days when it would have been perfectly useless to attempt putting to sea.

It would be tedious to relate in detail the intrigues, the hardships, and the disappointments of this most trying time. The English-speaking hostess, Madame Derikre of the *Raie de Chat*, proved a most unfailing friend, and it was to her resource and energy that they chiefly owed their ultimate success. Here and there we may trace a further likeness to Peter Simple's narrative in the adventures of Boys and his friends; especially in one episode

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where Mansell was disguised as a girl, and by this means effected his escape some time before the others. There is a touch of self-consciousness, vividly recalling the demeanour of Marryat's heroes under similar circumstances, in Boys' description of his acquaintance with two young girls, the sisters of a certain Auguste Neirinks, who ably forwarded the interests of the prisoners. With these ladies and their 'elderly mother' Boys 'frequently passed the evening, exciting the commiseration of the kind-hearted girls by the relation of my adventures.' There is also mention of Mademoiselle Julie, their cousin, 'an interesting young lady of nineteen,' who showed great concern in the 'Englishers'' safety. On one occasion—referred to with much complacency—it was necessary to pass off Boys as the brother of Mademoiselle Neirinks, and it is evident that they both entered into their parts with spirit. 'To be accompanied and protected by an amiable and innocent little girl; to be accosted as *frère*, imperceptibly growing into *mon cher frère*, was indeed an interesting novelty —a change of circumstances which I shall ever think and speak of with the most pleasing recollections.'

It was through Auguste Neirinks's agency that a passage to England was at last secured; the owner of a small sailing-boat undertook to run all risks for the sum of 80*l.*, and Neirinks himself was to accompany the party and receive handsome payment on the other side of the Channel. And thus, after seven months of hardship and suspense, these three tried companions landed at Dover early on the morning of May 9, 1808—a moment 'not to be described, but felt.'

From this point no conclusion to a romance could work ut more smoothly, or, indeed, more picturesquely. Betshanger, the home of Boys' parents, was only eight miles from Dover, and the four friends, including Neirinks, hired chaises and lost no time in setting out. As if to make the situation still more complete, the family at Betshanger had, during the last few weeks, entirely given up all hope of the prisoners. Mansell, with the best intentions, had called there on his arrival in England, to inform them that his comrades 'would be either dead or in England in three weeks.' As three months had passed without fresh tidings, they had naturally made up their minds to the worst, when, on this very 9th of May, a note was received by one of the brothers, announcing that 'Edward' would be with them before night.

'On the road from Dover, near Tilmanstone,' says the writer of the narrative, 'Neirinks, who was with me in the chaise,

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suddenly exclaimed, "*Regardez ce vénérable dans cette belle voiture!*" when I immediately recognised my father.' The greetings that ensued Boys describes with a reserve which fully commands our sympathy. 'As I do not,' he says, 'intend to intrude upon the public what more properly belongs to private detail, let the imagination of the reader depict that family meeting.'

Here the narrative, properly speaking, comes to an end; and who could wish a more satisfactory conclusion? It is pleasant, however, to be able to add that Edward Boys at once received his promotion, and was appointed lieutenant of the *Arachne*; and that later he found means of providing Madame Derikre with a much-needed pension in her old age. Hunter was soon employed and promoted; Whitehurst was less fortunate, for he was again taken prisoner, and detained till the close of the war. Mansell—rather a pathetic figure—soon afterwards died at sea. As for the three who survived, they achieved no special fame; they were merely good average men, such as the navy of that day produced by scores; they could wait, and plan, and act, as though instinctively, with an absolutely cool, dogged courage. Fortunately, the type is not extinct. It was, and is, a solid foundation of such men that supports the Service, 'on which,' to quote the well-known words of the Naval Discipline Act, 'under the good Providence of God, our wealth, prosperity, and peace depend.'

EVELINE C. GODLEY.

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El Dorado.

A CRIPPLE on the wayside grass,
  I watch the people come and go;
To many a fair abode they pass,
  Ladies and knights, a goodly show.
But though my lips prefer no sound,
  No less from all men I inquire:
'Oh, say, I pray you, have you found
  The country of your heart's desire?'

Some pass with pity for my lot,
  Some pass, nor heed, and others fling
A glance of scorn that wounds me not,
  Who in my heart am murmuring:
'Ah, could you buy, or could I sell,
  How gold and gem, and hall and squire,
You'd gladly give, like me to dwell
  In the country of the heart's desire!'

You travellers in lands afar,
  With that world-hunger in your eyes,
On every sea your galleys are,
  Your glances dare the darkest skies;
Yet for some land unseen, unguessed,
  Your eager spirits faint and tire;
I know the country of your quest—
  The country of the heart's desire.

A sudden terror veils you round,
  You lovers, even as you greet;
So close, so dear, your lives are bound,
  Your spirits have no room to meet.

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Have peace! There is a deeper faith,
  And there is a diviner fire,
A love more strong than time or death,
  In the country of the heart's desire.

And friends pass by with loyal mien,
  They are together—lonely yet!
A subtle barrier between,
  A longing, and a dim regret.
But they are wholly satisfied,
  And they have done with doubt and ire,
With grief and parting, who abide
  In the country of the heart's desire.

My country is a dream, you say?
  Nay, yours are dreams, and they shall cease,
And yours are visions, day by day
  Wherein you strive to find your peace!
But fair, and fadeless, and supreme,
  The home to which all souls aspire,
The only land that is no dream—
  The country of the heart's desire.

MAY KENDALL.

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The Evangelist.

JESSE MORRIS smoked his pipe at the end of his day's work in his sister-in-law's kitchen, before going out to see his sweetheart. With respect to the pipe, he was more fastidious than most of the wooers in his village, for these were wont to puff unfragrant incense under the very nostrils of their chosen maidens as they escorted them down the damp, delicious lanes in the evening, or sat sheepishly by them on benches in the Public Recreation Ground. But there was a strain of gentlemanliness in Jesse that had come perhaps of reading Macaulay's *Lays* or Carlyle's *Heroes* in the Free Library of Wetherby, the nearest town. And when he had first seen Nannie Archer's pretty babyish face, with its ridiculously positive mouth, and smooth, fringeless hair like a Madonna's, she seemed to him to have stepped out of the ideal world of books. She represented to him all manner of culture and gentlehood, and he thought of her as infinitely above him in feeling, in breeding, and in character, if not in wisdom.

He was very deeply in love, and it was the better part of the man that was immersed. Therefore he splashed clean water about his neck and brow under the kitchen tap, and combed his hair, and put on a clean collar and a tidy jacket, and went to present himself to the girl he loved as a self-respecting man should. His hand smelt of leather, for he was a saddler by trade, and the pungent odour of the tan clung to him. As he passed up the garden path he pulled off a sprig of lavender and a few young bay leaves, and rubbed them between his palms as he went along.

Nannie was not quite ready when he reached her mother's cottage. The children had come in late and she was washing the tea-things. Jesse thought she looked prettier than ever in her white bibbed apron over the neat blue gown. Her sleeve was rolled up a little, and the soft whiteness of her wrist as it moved deftly round the hard glaze of the cups and saucers looked more velvety than ever. Nannie had very pretty hands. She had

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been a nurse in a great family until she came home to the help of her invalid mother, and the light fingers had not had time to be coarsened by the work of the cottage. Jesse was not particularly comfortable in the home of his married brother, and the possibility of domesticity about Nannie heightened the romantic charm with which she was glorified in his mind.

Nannie's mother was sewing by the window; her sallow, drawn face showing yellow against the green leaves and vivid red blossoms of the geraniums ranged along the ledge. She evidently had a grievance, and hailed Jesse as an ally.

'And I'm sure you won't hold with it neither, Jesse—you, that alwis went to church reg'lar, and sang in the choir an' all. I can't think why a gel of mine should be that obstinate, and alwis thought so well on by the parson an' all.'

'What is it, Mrs. Archer?' said Jesse, with a kind glance at Nannie, who was looking flushed and distressed.

'Why,' said Mrs. Archer more shrilly, 'if she didn't go to an open-air meeting of them Ranters in the Recreation Ground last night while you was at Wetherby—her, that was alwis brought up so respectable and made to go to church twice every Sunday. I can't make it out, and I call it ondutiful and out of place in her. I ses to her, "Depend upon it," I ses, "Jesse won't approve of them goings on. It isn't as though he won't have a good home to take you to, that you must needs be mixed up with a lot of low folks like that."'

For a moment Jesse smiled. The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil had shed some of its leaves on the shelves of the Free Library, and Jesse had a feeling that it was the correct thing for an intelligent young man to possess his spirit as a Gallio in these matters.

He went to church regularly every Sunday evening when his sweetheart was free, partly because it was inconsistent with the character he bore in his own little world to do anything else, and chiefly because Nannie's tender conscience would have been wounded to the quick had he suggested that this prelude to their accustomed walk might be omitted. But he knew that men of his class and education who lived in towns did not go to church, and he felt himself perfectly able to criticise the pulpit platitudes of the easy-going old rector, who had always patted his lint-white locks when he met him as a child, and who nearly always stopped to shake hands with him even now.

He looked from the mother to Nannie, taking care to smooth

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the smile from his lips first, and saw that her distress was deepening every moment.

'They're not Ranters, mother,' she said in a low tone. 'And they say nothing but what's good. You shouldn't judge upon prejudice. It's just what you might hear in a church.'

'Then why do you trapse after them out of doors?' demanded the irritated mother. 'And a young fellow, too,' she went on inconsequently. 'I don't call it decent for a young gel; and I wonder, Jesse, as you'll allow it, I do.'

'Well, what's this?' said Jesse, smiling his perfect trust across at the girl. 'Come, Nannie, you know this won't do. I shall be jealous.'

His tolerance seemed to annoy Mrs. Archer, and she began her grumble over again, to the accompaniment of the rattle of the crockery, as Nannie arranged it, a little less quietly than usual, upon the shelves of the dresser.

At last she stood before him with a crimson face and tearful eyes, saying chokingly, 'I'm ready now, Jesse, and I'll tell you all about it as we go along. Can I get your knitting, mother, before I go?'

She kissed the fretful face as she put the knitting down in her mother's lap, took off her apron, put on her hat, and then the two went out through the garden and into the lane together.

'Jesse,' she said, shyly and painfully, her hand moving restlessly on his coat-sleeve, 'I've never talked to you much about religion, have I? I haven't liked.'

'No, dear,' said Jesse uncomfortably. He would not for the world that Nannie should be without her strong religious instincts; but he wished greatly that the subject need not be broached.

'Well, Jesse, I have often been unhappy in church because I couldn't feel all the prayers, and the sermons didn't seem to make me any better. And Mr. Harcourt, he's a good kind gentleman, but you know how he is, don't you, Jesse? Why, when poor Mrs. Kettle was dying and wanted him to pray by her, you know mother herself said how hot and nervous he looked, and how she believed he would sooner by half have sent her two or three bottles of port wine and come away without doing it.'

Jesse nodded.

'Well, Jesse, I heard the preaching on the green by accident, and it caught hold of me, and I stopped—and I can't tell you what it was like. It's an open-air mission for a week, and oh, I do so want to go again to-night, and you to come with me!'

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Jesse began to be a little irritated. His first impulse was to refuse point blank. In his double capacity of freethinker and regular churchgoer he revolted against identifying himself with anything of the kind. But to bluntly refuse any request of Nannie's was impossible, and the instinct of a lover, reverent of that high and mysterious thing, a woman's soul, saved him from being a selfish churl, and helped him to the battering of his peace.

So they went on together, and joined the little crowd assembled in front of the clump of elms at the end of the Recreation Ground. On a bench in the midst stood a young man, bare-headed, haranguing with outstretched hand. He was not a 'ranter'—Jesse could see that. Something in the restless, impassioned glance of his eyes, in the quick play of his mobile features, in the ring of his voice, reminded him of the conception he had formed from portraits and descriptions of the poet Shelley.

'That sort always appeal to women,' he muttered to himself, for he had not quite lost the cheap cynicism of the imperfectly educated in the pure stream of his love. But as he stood by Nannie's side and listened, he understood vaguely what this preaching meant to her. It was a revelation of the ideal for which her pure, fine spirit had been hungering in vain, and which the perfunctory ministrations of the easy-going vicar had altogether failed to supply for her. This did not prevent him from realising that the preacher probably was, as he expressed it to himself, 'a poor tool' in the ordinary affairs of life, with more fluency than fibre, with a womanish imagination and a fervidness of feeling which was doubtless the secret of his power over women.

Jesse looked at Nannie; she was rapt, though she still clung to his arm. She joined, with bent head, her vibrant note in the closing hymn, and then let him lead her silently away.

They spoke very little on their way home; but, as she kissed him at the door of her home, she begged him to come again to-morrow.

'She wants *me* to be converted,' thought Jesse, as he promised. 'Well, thank goodness, it will only last a week.'

Such being his mood he was hardly sorry when, on reaching home, his elder brother, with whom he was in partnership, asked him to go on a round of calls to their principal customers in the neighbouring villages. This would necessitate his being away four nights.

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He sent a message to Nannie, and departed next morning quite cheerfully.

On the fifth evening he came back. As he sat at tea his sister-in-law said :—

'That there Evangelist, as he calls hisself, has caught on wonderful. They say he's taken Smither's empty cottage for the winter, and means to turn the old barn into a meeting-house. He's powerful moving in his sermons. Mrs. Archer's quite out of temper with Nannie, she's so taken with him.'

Jesse finished his tea, but did not smoke his pipe. He hurried on to Mrs. Archer's. Nannie, with out-door raiment on, was coming down the path.

'Jesse!' she cried, as he caught her arms and kissed her.

There was a trouble in her eyes, which puzzled him; and her voice shook as she asked him commonplace questions about his journey.

He thought that she had probably been suffering a bad time within doors, and magnanimously assumed, without her asking him, that they would go to the preaching.

In the quiet evening light he stood by her side and listened. The golden sunset filtered through the elm leaves, and made dancing patterns on her hair and on her dress. He could not see her face, for it was turned towards the preacher; but he was happy enough in watching the curves of her pretty neck, and the ripples of her hair as it fell back from the white temple, which was all he could catch of her profile. He was very much in love. After the separation and hurry of the week, it was delicious to stand there and think that he was the possessor of the prettiest girl in the whole village, of the sweetest, kindest nature, the purest, whitest soul in the whole world. How good, how gentle she was!

He moved so that he could see her eyes. They were turned towards the preacher, and there was a look in them—Jesse's heart stopped still.

'Good God!' he said under his breath.

The low exclamation startled her. She looked round and caught his quick, devouring glance, and in her frightened gaze Jesse read the secret of her bared heart.

But the brain had not yet discovered the heart's secret. For a moment she looked at him, marvelling at his anger and despair.

Then her cheeks crimsoned and she dropped her head.

Jesse led her away to a seat out of earshot.

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'Nannie,' he said in a hard voice, 'will you promise me never to go near that man again?'

'Oh, Jesse,' she said, sobbing, 'I cannot. He has the words of life.'

He wanted to say brutally, 'And you're in love with him,' but he could not. Despite his cold, sickening despair, he knew that the poor girl could not dissever the two emotions in her own heart.

She thought she craved for the message; she did not know that she was under the spell of the messenger.

'Nannie,' he said, 'I'll have no sweetheart of mine hanging round that man any longer. Think of your mother, think of me, and then decide.'

Though she could not look him in the face, the wrong she had done him was not revealed to her. She only felt that she was persecuted for righteousness' sake, and herein, though she was frightened and unhappy, she tasted the finest luxury ever realised by the human soul.

'You're very cruel, Jesse,' she said, sobbing. 'I can't give up what is good and right. I can't give up the message God has sent me, even for your sake.'

'Very well,' said Jesse, rising; 'Jim wants some one to see to his branch business at Wetherby, and I'll ask him if it's agreeable for me to go, and to start to-morrow. If you loved me, Nannie, as much as you have always said, you'd do what I wish in this. I hope you'll get the good you look for,' he added bitterly. Then, more gently, 'If ever you want me, Nannie, you can count on me for a true friend, you know.'

When she lifted her face from her hands he was gone.

The crowd under the elms had dispersed. A few girls stood in groups at a distance eyeing her curiously, but she only saw the evangelist.

He was gathering up his books, occasionally glancing in her direction. Nannie was shaking in every limb. She could see Jesse's retreating figure at the churchyard corner, and at first she hoped sadly that he would come back. Then she felt her heart beating faster than it had beaten even on the day when Jesse kissed her for the first time, and all because she was wondering if the evangelist would cross the green in this direction, and if he would stop to speak to her.

Both these things happened; and Jesse, turning his head for a

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moment as he opened the churchyard gate, saw the two figures together.

His face, flushed before, stiffened and whitened, his set lips forced themselves apart, and, regardless that he stood among the dead, he sent up a cry to God that was a bitter curse.

Six weeks passed, during which Jesse worked doggedly at Wetherby for twelve or fourteen hours a day, and in his spare time read Mill *On Religion*. But Nannie's face, with her childish, innocent eyes looking out of it, always moved in front of him; and he tormented himself by imagining how those same eyes would be fixed on the evangelist with a light in them that he had never been able to kindle, even in the most successful days of his wooing. In his haste, and in his wounded pride, he formed his own theory of a woman's nature, and groaned to think that the girl he loved should be no exception.

'A woman is all feeling,' he said to himself; 'she can't help it. The religious feeling is the strongest of all, except the maternal. And just as a woman loves the man more because he's the father of her child, so, in the same way, she is like enough to love the man that fathers the other instinct in her. Women have adored priests in all ages; I know that. But, my God! it *is* hard. Think how good I'd have been to her.'

Sometimes he would hug the hope that, after all, he had been mistaken. Yet he dared not return, or even write to verify this hope, for his heart told him that what he had surprised was not a momentary mood, but an abiding fact. Again, he would think to himself that the evangelist was pretty well seasoned to women's admiration by this time, and that he would move on and win fresh captives to his bow and his spear. Then Nannie's heart would gradually swing back to its right place. But, having still an unbounded worship and admiration for his fickle mistress, he thought it very improbable that any other man could be so indifferent to such a treasure as to so lightly let her go. Besides, even if Nannie should turn to him again, how much of the joy, the trust, the proud confidence of their courtship would be utterly spoiled!

One morning at breakfast a letter came for him addressed in Nannie's ill-formed, girlish hand. He stared at it stupidly and heavily for a few moments, then, unmindful alike of his untouched meal and his day's work, he rose and left the house, taking the letter with him. The instinct of a suffering creature craving solitude led him to walk for a mile or so outside the town

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without stopping; then, when no one was in sight, he sat down on a stone beside the high road and opened it with shaking hands.

'DEAR MR. MORRIS,—When you left that evening on the green I think we both felt that all was over between us; but you were always so good to me that I should like you to think kindly of me, although mother and everyone else has nothing but blame for me, which, God helping me, I must bear. Mr. Gray, through whom God has done such great things for me, asked me last night to marry him and help him in his work. He says an evangelist's wife can do so much for the women and the young girls; and, though he is very poor, and with only twenty pounds per annum left him by his father, besides the free-will offerings of those whose hearts are touched, he thinks the Lord will provide. I am telling you about his poverty, dear Jesse—if I may call you so—that you may not think I am mercenary, for I know I am called to bear hard times, as well as the anger of my relations. Do try to think that it is the Lord's will, and that I could do no other, though I shall always pray for you, that your heart may be touched, as mine has been.—Yours truly,

'NANNIE ARCHER.'

That night, and for several following nights, Jesse Morris, in spite of his Free Library philosophy and his antecedent character, was taken to his lodging dead drunk.

The news soon reached his village, and Rufus Gray prayed publicly in Smither's barn for the brother who had trusted in his own righteousness and had fallen thereby into grievous sin. Afterwards, as he walked home with Nannie under the rising moon, he gently pointed out what a great danger she had escaped; and Nannie, with the evangelist's arm round her waist, felt, and very properly too, that she had done rightly. None of the Archers had ever done anything so disgraceful, and she could ask her mother now whether she would have liked her to marry a drunkard.

Nannie's engagement was soon made known in the village, but it had not that immediate effect of strengthening the good cause which Rufus Gray had urged, sincerely enough, in support of his suit. On the contrary, the attendance of the mission meetings distinctly fell away.

A large number had been young girls, and now that the preacher was engaged to be married they found less unction in his discourse.

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Some of the more genteel among them, who lived under the paternal roof and did fancy work, thought that he couldn't be of much account or he wouldn't marry a girl that had been in service. Some of the blunter spirits, nearer to her own class, continued to let Nannie feel that they considered Jesse Morris an ill-used person, and herself a good-for-nothing jilt.

The elders, too, disapproved of the turn things had taken, and even those who had been converted thought it very extraordinary that Jesse, with his fine, handsome figure, his good character, and his fair prospects, should have been sacrificed for a hollow-chested whipper-snapper, who was not properly accredited to any of the religious bodies known to them, but was a kind of free lance amongst them.

Nannie fell back upon her rôle as a persecuted person for such comfort as her enthusiasm for her lover left room to desire. But with her narrow outlook upon life, it was inevitable that she should feel the criticism of her own little world very keenly, and she was correspondingly relieved when the evangelist proposed that immediately after their marriage they should go to another town.

They were to be married in January, and it was now November. Jesse had run home to the village on a visit to his brother and his wife. Mrs. Jim was a person untroubled by finer feelings, and it never occurred to her that the mention of his old sweetheart could be so painful to her brother-in-law that he might not wish to hear even of her punishment.

'A nice mess that Nannie Archer has made of it,' she said, in the warmth of family feeling, as they sat down to a specially good supper. 'Serve her right, a sneaking turncoat.'

Jesse guided a little stack of beef steak and onions to his mouth with a zigzag movement, and then asked with his mouth full what was the matter.

'Why, that ranter she's taken up with is in a galloping consumption. He's got an old aunt to come up to nurse him, and he spits blood something awful.'

'What does Dr. Brett say?' inquired Jesse, still eating very fast.

'Says he must go to the south of France, or some place in Switzerland where it's terribly cold and high up. Queer kind of cure that, I should say. But I don't believe anything will do him good. He's not long for this world, you may be sure. I dare say that Archer girl wishes she'd known when she was well off.'

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The contemptuous allusion to Nannie cut him like a whip, but he could not exculpate her to Mrs. Jim. He spent a sleepless night, and the next morning went down to Smither's cottage.

The old aunt let him in to the simple living room, where the evangelist was cowering over the fire, his eyes, brighter than ever, fixed on the Bible on his knees.

At the table stood Nannie, preparing some milky food for the invalid.

The sick man half rose, looking confused and half angry, while Nannie seemed even more distressed. Jesse felt that he must rise to a difficult occasion.

'Sit down, Mr. Gray,' he said kindly, taking the invalid's hand.

'Good morning, Miss Archer.' He could not trust himself to touch the fingers she tremblingly stretched out to him.

Rufus Gray looked at him with bright, searching eyes, noting wistfully his stalwart figure and his ruddy health.

'God forgive me if I misjudge you,' he said querulously; 'but if you have come here to triumph over one who is brought low——'

'No, no,' said Jesse, almost sternly. The self-consciousness of the man revolted him, and the impulse of pity hardened into contempt. 'I came here in pure friendship. It would have been easier to have stayed away, you know that,' he went on significantly, seeing that Nannie had gone out of the room.

'It was the Lord's doing—I mean that she left you,' said the evangelist quickly. 'At first she was to me as any other gathered in by my ministry.'

'I believe that,' said Jesse briefly.

'And now God has interposed; His will be done.'

'You'll get better,' said Jesse, lamely; 'you mustn't give up hope.'

'No, no,' said the other irritably, his restless eyes never leaving Jesse's face. 'It can't be. All the same Nannie would marry me to-morrow,' with a triumphant smile that nearly maddened his listener. 'She would have *me*, half dead as I am. But I was a schoolmaster before I received the call, and I learnt a bit about physiology. The oppositions of science, falsely so called, don't concern the Lord's blessed work; but I know what it means, and I wouldn't do it.'

'I am sure you'd wish to do what was right,' was all Jesse could remark to this.

'But,' said the other, still peering wistfully, 'when I'm gone you'll try again, and I know what women are, even the best of

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them. Maybe you'll succeed, and then what will become of her soul? No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God. My friend,' he went on, 'I'm a dying man, and I must be faithful to you because of your sin. You'll drag her down with you.'

'I'm no drunkard!' began Jesse hotly, but remembering his week of shame he dropped his eyes, and at that moment Nannie returned.

Jesse stood mute for a moment, and then began the speech he had been pondering through the night. His tones were hard, for he was not used to lying.

'Dear friends, I've taken the liberty of mentioning Mr. Gray's case to a gentleman that has plenty of money, and is always on the lookout for broken-down—I mean to say, for ministers that are broken down in health. It's his hobby, as a matter of fact. And he has made inquiries about Mr. Gray and finds it's all right, and has commissioned me to make all arrangements for sending him to Davos Platz for the winter, at his expense. It's a certain cure,' he went on, more naturally, turning to Gray, 'and you'll come back in the spring a new man.'

Nannie burst into tears, and the invalid looked round at her with a long, eager glance before he said what piety and gratitude required. It did not occur to either of these simple souls to doubt the intervention of this unknown *Deus ex machina*, and Jesse felt all the soreness which comes to us when we are doing our noblest, and no man cares for the doer.

But he sustained the torrent of questions, of thanksgivings, of ejaculations, and finally departed, this time with the clasp of Nannie's hand warm in his own.

'Well,' he said to himself, as he trudged homeward moodily enough, for men of his breed, in spite of chivalric impulses, like to hold fast their money, 'it's an investment—that's what it is. If he gets better—well, I shall have made the woman I love happy, and heaped coals of fire on my enemy, and may be, if there is a God, it will be a set-off against that week when I made a beast of myself. If he dies, then that money will win me Nannie back again.'

A gleam of wintry sunshine smote upon his face as he walked. He lifted up his eyes and smiled exultingly to meet it, for in his heart he felt that his rival would die.

Rufus Gray died at Davos in February. In May Jesse, who had been away all the winter, came home again, and regularly

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every Sunday was found in the little brick chapel, which had been a shrine of such comfort as Nannie had found since her loss.

But he did not speak to her until late in August. She was always accompanied on her homeward walk after the service by two or three sympathetic girl friends, whose affection had returned to her in her trouble.

One particular evening he grew desperate, and, unasked, linked himself on to the group, talking industriously to the other girls, and patiently suffering their giggles and 'Oh lors' until they all reached the Archers' gate.

Then he stood squarely facing them, and addressing Nannie directly for the first time, he said:—

'I'd like to come in and pay my respects to your mother, Miss Archer, if it's convenient.'

The others took the hint and went off with nervous giggles. After that he was left to accompany her alone.

When he opened his heart to her for the second time, it was in a much less lover-like fashion than at his first wooing, for the exquisite freshness and glory of that time he knew could never return.

'Nannie,' he said gravely, 'you are a good woman, and you know it is not in accordance with God's will that you should give yourself over to grief all your life. He was a good man, and is now at rest. For you and me there is a life before us, and work.'

She looked timidly up at him.

'Oh, Jesse,' she said, 'do you really believe? Have you found it out for yourself?'

He stood chilled for a moment. The very ideality of this woman, that same quality which drew him so powerfully towards her, seemed to constitute the barrier between them. Would her regard for him always be of this vague, impersonal kind?

'I want you to help me. We were meant for one another. Doesn't everything show it?' he replied at last, doggedly and masterfully.

She thought of Rufus, lying in the still Alpine grave, and felt that if he had been buried in the little churchyard at home he would have seemed so much nearer to her.

Then she looked into the face of the living man before her, and felt his strong compelling will, felt also his earnest, honest love.

How shadowy and vague was the unknown world into which Rufus had gone! How difficult it was to feel his spirit always

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near, as she had hoped! How strong, how kind Jesse was! How trying her home life was! How certainly it seemed that she was to lead Jesse to feel and believe as Rufus, as she herself, felt and believed!

She stretched out her hand to him, only half knowing what she did, and a new, wholesome human life began for her.

Jesse kept the implied compact he had made. His wife's God, her worship, was his. He became an office bearer in the chapel, and sold all the books in his possession which he would not have cared for her to open at random. In all this he was no hypocrite, yet as his wife watched him in the prayer meeting or at a sermon, she would vaguely long for something in him which she had once known in another—a sense of upliftedness, of sure belief in beautiful, unseen things and in potent Presences.

And on his part, he felt that his wife, having accepted him, had suffered in descending to his level. She had parted with that spirituality of vision which had transfigured her maidenhood. She had been content with less than the highest she knew, and a glory had passed away from his beholding.

'Ah me!' as said the Prince of Story-tellers, 'which of us has his desire, or having it, is satisfied?'

MARY PENGUIN.

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A Naturalist's Rambles.

MARCH 30, 1900.—In Persia spring and winter overlap each other. 'Before the snow is off the ground, the trees burst into blossom,' says Mr. Binning in his account of travels in that country, 'and the flowers start from the soil;' and he tells us how on New Year's Day in Persia, whilst the snow was lying in patches on the hill-sides and in the shady valleys, the fruit trees were budding and green things springing up on all sides. Our seasons come and go far more gradually, and yet sometimes, if we have not been watching as we ought the unfolding of the year, being wrapped up perhaps in lesser and vainer things, such as money-making, we may wake up to the fact that the winter has gone, and the spring come once again. And this may be a town as well as a country experience. To-day in St. James's Park I found, as I walked west, that it was unmistakable spring. Between six and seven o'clock in the evening I stopped to listen to several blackbirds in a thicket on the north side of this pretty little park. There seemed to be about four cock birds all singing at the same time in rivalry. It was a fine open-air concert. Near the water, from the top of a plane tree, a song thrush was flinging out his strong, clear song. Several people passed close to the minstrel, workmen with their bags of tools, and others of the dim world of London labour; but they never glanced up at the tree or stopped to listen; perhaps they were too tired. In the leafless planes the ringdoves had already settled down to roost. They slept in pairs very close to, actually, I fancy, touching, one another. What a difference there is between this ringdove of London and the same species in the wild woods! In London he mixes with larrikin sparrows, and competes with them for morsels of bread and garbage; he nests in the most public places, he waddles about even among the fashionable tea-drinkers in Kensington Gardens on a summer day. In the woods, where he shuns man, whom he fears greatly, there

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is a glamour about the bird. I like to hear the clap of his wings on a winter evening when he has been disturbed at about roosting-time, and there is no intenser note in bird song than that deep 'coo, coo, coo' of his, so effective at all times, and especially when Nature is steeped in repose. I find nothing melancholy in the ringdove's note, but it has been often regarded so. In Attar's *Bird Parliament* the bird is reproved by the leader of the birds for sitting still and perpetually harping on that one note of lamentation. Fitzgerald mentions a curious tradition that the ringdove takes up his note exactly where he left off.

April 3, 1900.—Went into the University Museum at Oxford for an hour or two this afternoon, and was shown the Hopeian collection of butterflies and moths, which are at present in private rooms under the charge of Mr. Hamms and his assistant. Both are ardent entomologists, and they allowed themselves to be lured from their beloved work for a few minutes in order to talk of choice species and good localities. My entomology, I found, had got a trifle rusty. For instance, I imagined the white-letter hair-streak (*Thecla w-album*) to be practically extinct now in England, but I learnt that it was still to be found in various places containing wych elms, on which the caterpillar feeds. The black hair-streak (*Thecla pruni*) is far rarer; and neither Mr. Hamms nor his helper had any personal experience of this insect. Bagley Wood, on the road to Abingdon, used to be a favourite Sunday place of mine in Oxford days, and I learnt that it was still regarded as one of the best spots for several species of butterflies, such as the Duke of Burgundy fritillary (*Nemeobius lucina*). Then we got on to the subject of other and much more local species of fritillary butterflies. *Cinxia*, the Granville fritillary—now restricted, there is reason to fear, to a small district in the Isle of Wight—is regarded by many as a doomed insect. The abominable greed of certain collectors is not to be denied. The greasy fritillary, that pretty little butterfly, is still abundant at seasons in certain spots. Mr. Hamms told me of a place in the north-east corner of Hampshire where he has frequently found it swarming in early June. Curiously enough, I had, before he told me, selected this wild, rough common as a likely place for the butterfly. There, too, still flourishes the beautiful marsh gentian or Calathian violet, as it did in the last century. The Hopeian collection contains a good many striking varieties or variations, the pale form of the clouded yellow, named *Helice*, being, of course, amongst these. I have not seen *Helice* on the

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wing since 1877, when a child, but it continues to occur in those seasons when *Edusa*, the ordinary form, is abundant; and this rule may, I suppose, be applied in regard to most, if not all, the variety forms. One of the little gems of the collection seemed to me the silvery variety of the small copper butterfly. Mr. Hamms himself took this exquisite specimen—sometimes called the silver copper—near Oxford. Curiously enough, a day or two after its capture a friend went to the spot where he had taken it, and found a second one. The whole subject of these fixed varieties among butterflies is an interesting one, worthy the close attention of the men of science. And so, too, is the subject of the varieties of certain birds' eggs, such as those well-known forms of the blackcap's and the tree pipit's. Are these exceptional forms transmitted from generation to generation of birds?

It is Easter Vacation in Oxford, but the place is fairly lively. And beautiful it is beginning to look. Oxford is a bird-favoured city. The rooks build everywhere, and there is a large colony of jackdaws in the aged elm trees in the Magdalen grounds. Tennyson speaks of the 'wrangling daw,' and yet the bird seems to me to bring out, scarcely less than the rook itself, the stateliness of a broad-acred park with its noble and ancient timber. In Walton Street, where we are staying, we enjoy every day a concert in which robins, thrushes, and blackbirds perform splendidly. I have a fancy that I have never heard so many blackbirds in song as during the last week or two. The thrush's song seems to me, if I may put it so, more human than the blackbird's; the thrush is more a *speaking* bird, but the richness and sweetness of the other are glorious. 'The blackbird fluted mellow notes,' wrote Tennyson, with his usual accuracy in regard to the familiar English birds. The thrush keeps up his song longer than the blackbird, and I think it might be possible to write down or spell out some of his notes. The old poet Thomas Nash was probably thinking of cuckoo, nightingale, and thrush in the 'Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo' which ends up each of his three pretty verses in the poem beginning, 'Spring, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king.'

Most of the birds heard singing about Walton Street probably have their nesting quarters in the wild and beautiful gardens at Worcester College. Later on in the season these gardens will be visited by summer birds of passage too. I have read in some bird book—Morris's, I fancy—of my favourite garden warbler nesting there. Writing to me on the subject of beautiful gardens,

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Dean Hole makes an interesting suggestion: 'I heartily sympathise with your admiration of the garden at Worcester College. How delightful it would be if some rich philanthropist would make a large garden near Oxford on the English or natural system, so that future nobles and squires should repudiate the walls and wall-papers of the Italian style, and copy the Architect of the Universe instead of the builder in bricks and mortar!' One would like to wander with Dean Hole among the gardens of this entrancing city on a summer day; it would be quite a liberal education in horticulture.

April 4 *and* 5, 1900.—Rather chilly and ungenial weather, but cycled towards evening about some of my old haunts of the eighties, the country so delicately described by Matthew Arnold in his 'Scholar Gypsy' and 'Thyrsis.' *He* knew where the 'purple orchises' and the fritillary flowers of the Isis meadows grew, and wove them into his verse. There is a certain plaintive, far-off melody about the 'Gypsy Scholar' which always appeals to one; a rare spice of romance about the story too. Wytham village has not been spoilt since I last saw it on a grand May day. The builder has let it be. I passed through a gate or two, and reached the Trout Inn at Godstow. Then memories began to crowd upon me. What, I wondered, had become of B——, with whom I used to hunt for the nests of the reed warbler—several we found contained cuckoo's eggs—and yellow wagtail; and would not old H—— like to be standing on the bridge, even on this bleak April evening, looking on the garden where we used to sit at our golden ease, sipping a cooling drink of cider cup? Ah! but those were great days though idle ones! I thought too of J——. He was no field naturalist, but he loved the open air. There never was a higher spirited fellow, full of chaff and fun, and partial to a practical joke at a friend's expense; but very adverse to one at his own. Full, too, of strength and vigour, and abounding confidence in himself and his prospects. He *ought* to have succeeded. But life went hard with him. He is dead. I recollect I played, by way of vengeance, one severe practical joke on him, and now I wish I had not. J—— was a poet of sorts, and fond of reciting his own verses, as well as portions of 'Maud,' and 'Arethusa arose——.' He had played a practical joke on me, so once I copied out some unfamiliar verses of Tennyson's, intimated bashfully that they were my own, and sought J——'s expert advice and revision. He did revise them, and went to other men in College and said, 'Old D——'s a good sort, but his idea of poetry

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is too funny for words'; and amid peals of laughter he would recite my verses to them. Presently it came out that he had been correcting Tennyson, and the effect on J—— was distressing. But we were fast friends thereafter. It was all forgiven and forgotten; and J—— would recite the wonderful 'Aylmer's Field' to me, and 'Locksley Hall,' and 'Arethusa,' and get me to read to him the 'Ode to the West Wind.' Godstow must have memories for many Oxford men who loved the Upper River. The Upper River was always my favourite part of the Isis in spring and summer days, and I am afraid I soon left off 'tubbing' as a freshman on the Lower River, and was only too glad to exchange the chance of rowing in Torpids or Eights for the joy and sense of absolute independence felt in sculling to Godstow or Eynsham with a friend or two. Occasionally we used to take our names off 'Hall,' and start directly after lectures—if not before—for Medley Lock, where we got a boat, and managed to double-scull so high up even as Bablock Hythe. The very name is one to dwell upon lingeringly, even out of Matthew Arnold's fascinating line, 'The stripling Thames at Bablock Hythe.' Up there the river is narrow, and the current very strong in parts. It winds so much that there used to be a story that a man in a sculling boat, working his laborious way up-stream, stopped a few moments to ask some hay-cutters the name of the next lock. Presently, after he had pulled on again, he found himself once more opposite the same group of workers. The story was told, of course, by a freshman as one of his interesting aquatic experiences.

The river is beautiful and lonely on summer days above Wytham Woods (where the hobby used to breed in my time at Oxford) and Eynsham, which has a fine old bridge. I have seen the mayfly gulped down more than once by a heavy trout up there; the comfrey grows in great quantities, white and purple-coloured; the song of reed and sedge warbler is never-ending. And you may scull on for hours without meeting another boat. How rhythmical and good to hear at such times is the sound of the scull in the rowlock! Then there is the scull home in the still of the evening past King's Weir and through the lock cut at Godstow. I think I have almost smelt the clustering roses on the wall of Godstow Inn as I rowed down that water on a June night.

April 6, 1900.—Back to the inn at B—— after half a year's absence, coming by train over the Ilsley Downs and past the noble chalk hills of Sidown and Beacon. The edge of the pleasure

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felt on first arrival in the spring at some familiar country inn or cottage is always so keen. Almost the first things we noticed when we got into the parlour were the scented white violets, most chaste surely of all the early spring flowers. I know exactly the sort of hedge under which they grow, because March after March when a child I used to look for and find them to a certainty. They are hardy little flowers, and begin to show up before primrose or celandine dares. At tea, of course, we thought we never tasted such good watercress before: that is the sort of harmless fancy one should allow oneself on such occasions. The winter has taken its toll of lives here in this little hamlet. Old F——, in his ninetieth year, has gone at last, and his cottage, which was in a sad state of dilapidation, is being restored, papered, painted, and made quite fresh and pleasant to look upon. The old fellow worked till within a few days of his death, when he 'took to his bed.' The day before the end a little child came to him with a basin of soup, but he had a fancy for beer, not that he was a drinker—far from it. So the child went down and drew him a glass from his own little barrel, and took it up to him. Ale for a man hovering between life and death seems a strange drink. The doctors might have stopped it, but what did it signify after all? One recalls the 'Northern Farmer':

> 'What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn bring ma the aäle?
> Doctor's a 'toättler, lass, an a's hallus i' the owd taäle;
> I weänt breäk rules fur Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor a floy;
> Git ma my aäle, I tell tha, an' if I mun doy I mun doy.'

Next day the lonely old man, or the husk or empty case of him, was found dead in his bed. He had died before the dawn. But, strange to say, by his bedside were the remains of a little bread and cheese and ale—the fragments of his last supper. Had he gathered strength in the night to go down that steep little ladder-like staircase and bring up these things to his bedside? How else did they find their way there? The old man had worked in a small way till very near the end, but he died worth some five hundred pounds, which were kept, not in the traditional old stocking, but invested in gilt-edged securities. He had money at the Savings Bank at 2½ per cent. and money in Consols at 2¾ per cent. He was scarcely what you would call a miser—that is an evil name—but he exercised strict economy in his housekeeping, never allowing himself eggs except when they could be got at the rate of sixteen a shilling, and could not understand

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by the time the underwood is cut, has usually grown rather too large for hurdling purposes. Some skill is required to turn out good hurdles, and a good hurdler is always sure of work. A very smart young woodman can in a long working day turn out as many as a dozen hurdles, for which he will be paid four shillings. But it is the laudable ambition of many woodmen to be little capitalists themselves, to buy the wood standing, to cut it and to make up the fagots and hurdles, selling the latter at about eight shillings, or eight and sixpence even, a dozen 'in the copse.' Is not the woodman's life a very ideal one? Ever since I was a child I have loved to stand and watch the hurdler at work. At one time I used to try and get a little information about the wild creatures from him, or his son, who often works with him, picking out and handing the wood and helping generally. Did he know of any crow's nest or young squirrels? Had he seen any adders yet? This was the kind of question I would put to him. One or two of my woodmen friends could usually give me a little help, though their knowledge of natural history was scarcely extensive. Civil, hard-working, industrious fellows, these makers of hurdles—such has always been my experience of them. Hurdling begins in the early spring, and continues throughout the summer. On the whole the life must be a very wholesome one. The woodman in rough weather commonly props up three or four hurdles with poles, to protect him from the wind, which blows hard over the ground that has recently been cleared of all its tall thick underwood, and he certainly need not want for shade as the season advances and the oaks become clothed once more. Wet weather is the worst time for him. To work for hours sometimes in damp or sodden clothes is to court that common ailment of the villagers, rheumatism—'rheumatics' they call it. And yet I do not know that rheumatism claims a larger percentage of workers in the wood than of workers in the field: the ploughman, the carter, and the shepherd all suffer from it at times.

GEORGE A. B. DEWAR.

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In the Name of a Woman.

By Arthur W. Marchmont,

Author of 'By Right of Sword,' 'A Dash for a Throne,' &c.

CHAPTER XVI.

'IF I WERE A WOMAN.'

We had been together about half an hour, discussing eagerly the news which Spernow had brought when Zoiloff arrived. His face showed that he too had passed anxious hours since we parted. I received him with a laugh and rallied him upon his looks, and then told him the news.

He had not the same intense personal interest in it that I had, and he received it very differently; though his friendship made him understand my feelings.

'It is her first step,' he said, gravely. 'We must act warily.'

'A necessity for others besides ourselves,' I retorted.

'It is not certain what form his hostility will take. He may not care to quarrel openly with you, Count; although, if he does, you know he is not a swordsman to be taken lightly.'

'He would serve me no ill turn were he to send his sword through my heart,' I answered, and meant every word I said.

'That would be an ill enough turn for us, though.'

'Let us go to the gallery and see. I have scarcely closed my eyes all night, and when Spernow came he found me hipped and down. It will be a good test for my nerves. If I can hold my own against you under such conditions, we need not be doubtful about this other affair.'

In a few minutes we were busy with the foils, and I told Zoiloff to try with all the skill at his command to beat me. For myself, I tried to make myself believe for the moment that he was the man whom I might have to meet, and I put forth every effort. I never fenced more skilfully or with more spirit, now limiting

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myself only to defensive measures and now forcing the attack with vehement and even fiery impetuosity.

'I cannot hold you, Count,' said Zoiloff, at length; 'I have not touched you once, except that graze on the leg, and you have had me three times badly. If this were earnest I should be a dead man. But, remember, you know my work now, and that I am not the Duke's equal with the sword.'

'I must take that risk, and shall not take it without pleasure, I assure you.'

'But that's not the only risk to be taken.'

'You are in a despondent mood, my friend,' I said, for I knew he referred to what General Kolfort might do afterwards. 'Let's meet them one at a time. This one faced and overcome may mean much to us; and, at any rate, will put us in good heart for what may follow.' My spirits were now as high as previously they had been depressed, and once again I was full of fight.

Zoiloff told me what he had already done to expedite our plans, and when I went to do my regimental work even the knowledge of what I had to tell Christina she must be prepared to do had become less oppressive and disheartening.

On my return home, however, I found a note from Mademoiselle Broumoff, asking me to see Christina at once. 'General Kolfort has been with her this morning, and something passed which has upset the Princess extremely. Although she has not told me that she wishes to see you, I am sure of it. Don't mention this letter.'

This alarmed me, and early in the afternoon I was at her house. I found her looking troubled and agitated, and so pale that I was filled with concern. She received me as graciously as usual, but I could detect a touch of shrinking reserve.

'I hope you have no ill news; we cannot, of course, expect a big scheme like ours to go forward without an occasional check,' I said.

'There must be no check—none if I can prevent it, that is.' She spoke very sadly, and then forced a smile to her face.

'You have had some news, I see,' I said after a pause.

'Yes, I have bad news; I have had General Kolfort here.'

'His visit was probably the outcome of yesterday's event.'

'Have you come to upbraid me with what you think my weakness?' she cried quickly, with a swift glance of reproach.

'No, indeed not. But when the Countess Bokara left me she declared with all the malice in her that she would do her utmost to ruin us all. I judge that she has commenced—that is all.'

'She cannot ruin us. Let her do her worst.' It was easy to

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see, however, that the first blow had been a telling one. Then a thought struck me.

'I think I can tell you the purport of General Kolfort's message,' I said quietly. 'He is anxious to push forward a certain step in his plans to bind you to him. I mean, of course, your marriage.'

Her face grew scarlet, and I guessed it was at the remembrance of the bluntness with which the General would have told her what he had heard about us. I could judge well enough the way he would speak.

'Have you seen him?' she asked after a pause.

'No; but I foresaw what must happen,' I answered gently. 'It was inevitable. The only practical proof you could give him of the falseness of the rumour that that woman has set abroad.'

She locked her fingers tightly together, and her face was drawn and troubled. My heart ached for her. Remembering my own sorrow, I could gauge the bitterness of hers. Presently, in a low tone of despair, she said:

'The marriage is to take place in three days;' and, hiding her face then in her hands, she abandoned herself to emotions which she could no longer control. I turned to the window and looked out, that she might have time to regain some measure of calmness.

Presently I heard the rustle of her dress, and I turned round and went back to her.

'You have caught me in a moment of weakness, Count,' she said, smiling through the cloud on her brow and in her eyes. 'I think you had better leave me.'

'I came prepared for the news. Indeed, I came to tell you myself that you must be ready to hear it.'

'I would rather have heard it from you;' and she smiled wearily. Then, laying her hands impulsively in mine, she said sweetly but mournfully: 'It is hard to inflict sorrow like this, and I do not hide from myself, dear friend, that this must give you pain. Believe me, that thought is not my least grief in this. If I were only a woman,' she cried, with a deep sigh.

Her words and tenderness almost unmanned me. I had no words to reply, but stood still, holding her hands in mine and meeting her gaze with glances that spoke the love I felt.

'I have no thought but for your happiness,' I murmured at length.

'Happiness?' she whispered; and her eyes closed an instant as she drew a deep breath as of unbearable pain. Then she

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mastered her emotion. 'I must never see you alone again, Count. I ought not to have seen you now, but—I am a woman. I felt I must thank you once alone, and tell you how it wounds me to wound you thus. Others may think of me as ambitious, cold, unwomanly, selling myself for a throne, a heartless creature without the attributes and qualities of my sex. But you will know the truth. You must know it, even if I bare my inmost heart in telling you. You will not think ill of me, though I have made you so poor a requital for all that you have done and would do for me. Do you think I am seeking my happiness in this?'

'Forgive me that word. If I know what you are suffering in this it is because my own heart tells me; and I dare not utter all that it tells me.'

'You are a strong man and will fight it down.'

'I shall never forget,' I cried earnestly, my voice hoarse with passion. 'And never again so long as my heart beats will it hold a feeling such as that which fills it now.'

This pleased her, and she smiled sweetly and tenderly, while the clasp of her fingers tightened on mine.

'Would God it could have gone otherwise for us,' she breathed, her eyes lingering lovingly on my face, with infinite sadness and yearning.

I carried her fingers to my hot lips and kissed them fervently.

'Go, go,' she cried passionately at the touch of my lips. 'Go, or I shall bid you stay, let the consequences be what they will.'

I looked up into her radiant face, now fired with her passion.

'One touch of your lips, if only to ease my suffering.'

The ruby colour flowed rich and deep over her face, and, bending forward, she kissed me on the forehead.

'Go, in pity for me, go,' she cried, excitedly.

One moment longer I stood, gazing at her with my soul in my eyes, feasting my senses on the signs of her love, and then I tore myself away. A last glance as I left the room showed me that she had thrown herself back in her chair with her hands clasped in front of her face.

I rushed back to my house, my head bewildered and dizzied with the sweet delirium of her avowed love, and I sat like a crazy loon for hours, running over and over again in thought all the incidents of the scene.

She loved me. Nothing could rob me of the sweetness of that knowledge. All else that could happen was as nothing compared to that. The plot might succeed or fall; she loved me. Bulgaria

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might be free or enslaved; she loved me. The Russians might triumph or fail; she loved me. It was the one balm for every sorrow, one true note of joy in every trial; she loved me; and I was mad with the delight of it all.

In the early evening Spernow came to me; and then I remembered with an effort—for all memory was swallowed up in the one delicious remembrance of her love avowal—that I had promised to go out with him. I did not care whether I went or stayed; what I said or did, all was alike indifferent to me; but when he urged me, I dressed and went with him. As we drove along he said something, however, which brought my intoxicated wits together.

'Duke Sergius will be here to-night, Count. We shall see what he means to do.' I laughed so loudly that he looked at me in surprise. What cared I for the Duke Sergius? I carried a charmed life, for Christina loved me. He might marry her: but it was I had her heart. If he killed me, he could not alter that. And whether I lived or died mattered nothing now. I hoped he would quarrel with me. 'To be married in three days.' Marriages are not made with the dead, my lord Duke, I thought, and laughed again.

'If he wants to quarrel he will find me ready enough,' I said, boastfully and noisily; but before I entered the house I had put a restraint upon myself and wore my usual reserve, covering up that mad, wild, whirling passion that was heating every vein in my body. I soon saw, too, there was a cause to be wary.

'His friends are in strong force here,' muttered Spernow, as together we entered the room and were greeted by our host, a man named Metzler, who led us forward chatting pleasantly about nothing.

There were about a dozen of us in all in the room, and the first glance showed me that it was intended to be a wet, wild night. Three or four of the men I knew to be dare-devil scapegraces, hard drinkers and harder players even for that city of hard drinking and high gambling, and it was easy to see by their faces that some of them had made haste to begin, for they were already flushed and excited. It was the kind of party where an empty glass was considered a sign of discourtesy to the host.

The Duke was gambling, but saw me enter, and when I approached him gave me no more than a surly nod in place of his customary rather effusive greeting. I augured well from this, but was careful to be particularly courteous.

In a few minutes Spernow and I were seated at a table playing some silly card game or other for fairly high stakes. I felt no

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interest in it, and cared not one jot whether I won or lost. I staked moderately and drank very sparingly, finding my amusement in watching the flushed eagerness of the men about me; the noisy laughter when they won, and the muttered oaths when fortune went against them.

I glanced now and again at the other tables, and I noticed that the Duke was in much the same mood as myself, and twice caught him scowling angrily and darkly at me. Each time I laughed in my heart and smiled pleasantly with my lips.

'Fortune with you, Duke?' I cried the second time.

'My turn is coming,' he answered, with an expression that in a dog or a wolf you would call a snarl.

'Well, don't be afraid to back it when it does come. I'm winning,' I said with another smile, as though cards were the one absorbing thought in my head just then. But he seemed to put his own interpretation on my words, for he answered in a surly tone:

'Ah! your luck may change;' and he turned to his game again.

After an hour or two a halt was called for supper, and I observed that the Duke scrupulously avoided me. I noticed, too, that he had begun to drink much more freely, and while I chatted with the men about me I kept a close watch upon all that he did.

As soon as supper was finished the glasses were refilled and the gambling began again.

'Thank Heaven that's over; now we can settle down to business,' said one of the men near me, who had been a high player and a heavy loser; and that voiced the thoughts of most men in the room.

An hour later I noticed that Spernow was infected with the mania for high play. He was staking large amounts, which I knew he could not afford to lose, and he was losing them. I gave him a warning look or two, but he would pay no heed; and to create a diversion I declared that I had played enough. It was all to no purpose, however. It did not check him, and it irritated the men about us.

For that I cared nothing, but it brought the crisis for which I had been waiting. The men were urging me to continue, and I was refusing, when I heard the Duke say to a man at his table, in a voice intentionally loud enough to be heard by all:

'Nothing like cards to test a man's pluck;' and he accompanied the words with a sneer and a shrug of the shoulders.

I would not take the words to myself, though I knew, as did the rest, that they were flung at me.

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'I would rather not play again,' I said to those about me.

'I don't suppose we are to stop, gentlemen, to please one man's caprice—or cowardice, or whatever you call it,' said the Duke insolently.

'You will not mind if we resume, Count?' said our host, nervously, trying to fill the awkward pause that followed the words.

'Not in the least,' I answered, pleasantly, for all the anger that began to stir in me. 'I will look on.'

'No, no, Metzler,' cried the Duke noisily. 'I object to that. Lookers-on can see too much and can make use of their knowledge. If Count Benderoff is too careful of his money to play, you should ask him to retire.'

'That is the third unpleasant thing you have said about me in as many minutes,' I said, turning pointedly to him, but speaking coolly.

'Is it?' and he laughed insolently. 'Well, you're doing a deuced unpleasant thing, and I suppose I may express my opinion.' This time two of the other men sniggered.

'I have merely expressed a wish to play no more.'

'And you do it with an air of a highly virtuous priest with a mission to teach us how to behave ourselves. We don't want you Englishmen or Roumanians, or whatever you please to call yourself, coming here to set up any canting standard of morals. We can look after ourselves,' he sneered, his face flushed and his eyes glittering angrily.

The situation was fast growing serious, and every man stopped to watch us two.

'I have done nothing of the kind, as you and these gentlemen know quite well. It seems that you wish to insult me wantonly.'

'Do you mean to say that I don't speak the truth, Count Benderoff?' he cried, rising and coming towards me.

'Gentlemen, this has surely gone far enough,' said Metzler, his face pale, as he put himself between us hurriedly. 'The Count has only expressed a desire not to play any longer, and, of course, in my house I should not think of urging him;' and he glanced at the rest, as if asking them to interfere.

'Our host's views are my answer to you,' I said.

But the Duke was bent on the quarrel.

'A very discreet shield,' he sneered, and then his passion broke out. 'What I said I maintain,' he continued furiously. 'You have tried deliberately to break up the party with your infernally domineering interference. I have had far too much of

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your interference, not only here but elsewhere. I'll have no more of it. Who are you, to come thrusting yourself into concerns that are nothing to you? If you don't like our company, leave it; and if you don't like the country, leave that too. And the sooner the better. This is no garbage-heap for either renegade Roumanians or cowardly English to be carted here;' and he laughed in my face.

My blood boiled at his words, but I meant the quarrel to go even farther yet, and after a pause of dead silence I answered clipping my words short:

'Rather a hunting-ground where a fortune may be picked up by any drunken, bankrupt Russian duke, infamous enough to stoop to any cowardly baseness.'

He could scarce restrain himself to hear me out before he flung himself at me in wild, desperate rage.

I caught his arm in my left hand as it was raised, and flinging out my right with all my strength I struck him a violent blow on the mouth and knocked him down.

In another moment the men had thrown themselves between us, holding him as he struggled to his feet and drew his sword, striving to get at me and cursing wildly.

I was as cool now outwardly as if nothing had happened, and in my heart a feeling of almost wild exultation throbbed and rushed.

'You are all witnesses, gentlemen,' I said to the men near me, 'that from the first this quarrel has been forced upon me. Lieutenant Spernow, for the present you will act for me.'

'I will have your life for this!' cried the Duke, mad with rage.

I made no reply. There was nothing more to be gained by any further taunts.

'I am sorry this has happened here and to-night,' I said to my host. 'But you must have seen it was none of my seeking. You will excuse me if I go.'

I left, and walked home with a feeling of rare pleasure at the thought of the coming fight. If I did not punish him for his foul insult, then surely was I what he had said—a coward.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DASTARDLY SCHEME.

As soon as I reached home I despatched a servant in hot haste for Zoiloff, and when he arrived I told him what had happened.

'He forced the quarrel on you?' he asked.

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'Certainly. I was willing enough, Heaven knows; but there was not a man in the room who would not have to say that I bore his insults till I must have seemed all but a coward. But I wanted to make this thing a life and death affair. And it is that.'

'You will kill him?' he asked, his dark eyes glowing.

'If I can,' I replied, shortly and sternly.

'Good. But Heaven knows what will happen afterwards. Though if the thing gets wind your meeting may be prevented. Old Kolfort will be mad; and if he had a tool there, as is most probable, you may be arrested before morning.'

'I never thought of that, or I would have finished the thing on the spot.'

'And gained the reputation of having killed a man in his cups. Thank Heaven you didn't think of it. I suppose the man means to fight, but, like his master, Kolfort, he's such a snake you never know what he does mean till he has done it.'

'No man who spoke as he did could hope to escape a fight,' I replied, growing uneasy at his words. 'What do you suspect? After a blow, too, he must fight.'

'He's the sort of man who'd be capable of anything. He might insult you openly like that, send the challenge, and then have you seized secretly and shut up, and when you didn't appear on the ground in the morning, post you for a coward. I know him.'

'It would be an infernal move!' I cried hotly.

'It would be reckoned a smart Russian trick,' said Zoiloff drily.

'Then, we'll checkmate it. We'll have enough men here to make my arrest impossible; or, better still, perhaps, I'll pass the night somewhere else. You and Spernow can arrange all the preliminaries of the meeting, and appoint a meeting somewhere to-morrow morning, but not fix the actual ground until that appointment is kept by him and his seconds only. I will be where you can readily fetch me.'

'Good! Yes, we'll do that. You'll have choice of weapons. What shall they be? I should choose pistols. You're sure to kill him.'

'He shall have a chance to save his life. We'll have swords. But, mind, the fight is to be to the death. No stopping for a trickle of blood!'

'That's the spirit I like,' cried Zoiloff bluntly; and then we discussed the plan I had suggested. He told me where I could sleep and he and Spernow could find me in the morning.

'I should be off at once if I were you—and, mind, get a

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night's rest. You'll need all your skill, even if we succeed in bringing him up to the scratch.'

'I'll go the moment Spernow arrives.'

'Then take my advice. Let your people have a horse saddled at once and kept in readiness close to some back way out. I know these Russian dodges.'

I adopted the suggestion at once, and, sending for my head groom, Markov, told him to saddle my horse and his, where to station himself, and to be prepared to be away with me for the night; and, lastly, to hold his tongue. After that I changed hurriedly into an undress uniform, got together the one or two things I should need, and joined Zoiloff.

'I don't like this long wait,' he said impatiently. 'I seem to smell something wrong. Why do they keep Spernow like this? I should go, Count, if I were you.'

'I can't go till I know the man's making a show of fighting, at any rate.'

'Picket one or two of your fellows, then, to give us warning. The house may be surrounded before we know anything has happened.'

'It isn't necessary. The place is like a rabbit warren; there's an underground passage that lets out a hundred yards away, and it's there I've told the man to have the horses. Half a regiment couldn't keep me in if I wanted to get out.'

'Some infernal spy or other may have found that out;' and then, to satisfy him, I sent out half a dozen men to keep watch.

A quarter of an hour later Spernow arrived, but not before Zoiloff's patience had long given out. Spernow explained that the delay had been caused at the other house, and not by any fault of his own.

'Did anyone leave before you?'

'Oh, yes; the meeting broke up soon after the Count left.'

'Good-night, Count,' cried Zoiloff instantly. 'Don't lose another moment.'

'The fight is to come off?' I asked eagerly.

'Of course,' said Spernow, in surprise, not guessing our suspicions.

'Then good-night. Zoiloff will explain everything;' and as I turned to leave a servant came hurrying in, pale and excited, to say that a number of men, some in uniform, were approaching the house, and had tried to detain him. The next moment a furious summons at the front door told us they had arrived.

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Before the noise had ceased to reverberate through the house, I was in the underground passage, hurrying at full speed to the place where the horses were awaiting me. Zoiloff's suggestion that General Kolfort might know of the secret passage gave me a twinge of uneasiness, and as I paused to open the little door of outlet my fears were more than verified, for I heard the cries of men as they entered the passage from the house end. I held a revolver ready as I slipped out into the night, and at a little distance to the left I caught sight of a couple of men, just perceptible as shadows in the gloom.

Guessing that they were after me, and had not known quite where to lie in wait, I ran swiftly in the opposite direction, fortunately to the spot where I should find my horse. Once in the saddle, I did not fear pursuit. They saw me, despite all my precaution, and raised a shout, while one of them fired a pistol, presumably as a signal, and then I heard them come clattering after me.

The shot was answered by others, and the place seemed alive with men. But I was near to the horses now, and could see them in the little clump of trees where I had told Markov to wait.

'Have you seen any horsemen about?' I asked, as I sprang into the saddle.

'No, sir,' replied the groom, but at that moment the sound of galloping came from both directions.

There was going to be a tussle after all, it seemed.

'You have your pistols. If anyone tries to stop us, you have my orders to fire—but only at the horses, mind. Follow me close.'

We were on a small heath, and I pricked my horse into an easy canter in the direction I had to take to get to the place of which Zoiloff had told me.

'Halt! Who goes there?' and the horseman checked his steed with a rattle of steel that told me he was a cavalryman.

'A friend,' said I, but not drawing rein.

'Halt!' came the cry again. The horseman behind was now coming up fast, and I could hear the sounds of the others scurrying after us on foot.

'I'm in a hurry, and can't wait,' I said.

'Halt, or I shall fire,' and I heard him get his carbine; but I was not going to be trapped by a single cavalryman, and before he had an idea of my intention I had carried it into execution.

We were nearly abreast of him, cantering easily, when I wheeled my horse round, dug the spurs into his sides, dashed right against the man who had challenged me, dragged his weapon from his hands, and flung it on the ground.

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'Now,' I called to the groom, 'as fast as the wind, and bend low;' and together we rattled over the heath at a pace that made pursuit hopeless, even had the two men behind been inclined for a chase. But they were not. A couple of shots were fired after us, but as the darkness hid our forms, and the grass deadened our horses' footfalls, they were but random shots, not destined to find their billets in our bodies.

After a sharp burst for some ten minutes, I drew rein and listened. Not a sound. I had shaken off the pursuit. At the same time I deemed it advisable to take a roundabout route to our destination, and in this Markov, who knew every square inch of the country, was able to guide me.

We reached the place without further mishap; and Zoiloff's name acted like a magic pass-word to secure the accommodation we needed. Thus my Russian friends had not even the satisfaction of robbing me of my night's rest.

I woke in the morning, all anxiety to know how Zoiloff and Spernow had fared, what arrangements had been made, and whether, after all, we should succeed in bringing off the fight without interruption.

I could also take a clearer view of the seriousness of the attempt made to capture me on the previous night. The more I considered it the less I liked it, for I read in it a determination on the part of General Kolfort to remove me from his path, at all events, until after the marriage of the Princess. He had viewed the fact of our love as a possible stumbling-block in the path of his policy, and was resolved to deal with it in his usual drastic way; and it was easy enough to see that even after the duel he would continue to pursue me.

Zoiloff arrived while I was in this rather gloomy, meditative mood.

'I have been speculating all the night whether I should find you here, Count, for I could not learn from the men who came to your house whether they had caught you or not. They were wild at not finding you there, and ransacked the place from cellar to roof; and almost the first place they searched was that underground passage. I concluded, of course, that they would have men posted at the other end, and feared therefore that they had got you in a trap. How did you escape?'

I told him briefly what had happened, and that only his forethought had saved me.

'And what of the duel?' I concluded eagerly.

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'All is right, so far, I'm glad to say. Of course the Duke couldn't appear to back out in the least; and his men represented him as full of fight. We had a bit of a tussle over the conditions, but I wouldn't give way. They wanted me to fix the time and place at once; but I told them pretty plainly that to do that might be doing no more than giving an excellent appointment for making the arrest that had just failed, and, in short, that it was impossible. In the end they had no option but to agree, and we are to meet at a little village about five miles north of here at nine o'clock, and then settle the ground. What I propose is that you should ride on about a couple of miles further—I know a splendid place for a meeting there; your man will probably know the ground; and if I find no treachery in the wind I'll bring them on. If there is anything wrong, I'll fix another spot, and let you know somehow. But I think it'll be all right. The men acting for him are perfectly straight.'

'Yes,' I assented readily. 'It's an excellent plan.'

'But what about afterwards? If you kill him, there will be the deuce to pay; and I should think you will have to fly the country for a while at least.'

'No, I shall go back to Sofia and face it out. Men have been killed in duels before. The fight was forced upon me, and everything's in perfect order. Why should I run away?'

'Russian dukes are not often killed in duels, especially when so essential to Russian schemes,' he answered drily.

'I shall take my chance of the consequences. We're not so feeble that they can do what they like to me. I shall face it out.'

'How would it be to stop short of killing him?'

'My dear Zoiloff, if you had had said to you what was said to me, you would view the thing as I do,' I said sternly, and he made no reply.

I called in my man then, and Zoiloff gave him precise instructions which way we were to ride, and where to wait; and soon afterwards he started to meet the Duke and his seconds. I mounted within a few minutes of his departure, and as I rode at an easy pace I was very thoughtful, though exultant at the prospect of the encounter.

It was a glorious morning. The sun was hot and bright, but a fresh, invigorating breeze was blowing, and the country looked beautiful. The hardy, stalwart peasantry, men and women alike, were at work everywhere in the fields, toiling with that indus-

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try for which they are famed in all the East; and, save that here and there were to be seen the ruined homesteads which told their grim story of the fearful struggle of a few years previously, the landscape seemed redolent of the new blessing of content which the better rule of the Prince had brought in its train, and full of the promise of prosperity, if only the ban of political intrigue could be removed—certainly a land of promise with a great future under a ruler with such high ideals and motives as Christina.

As I thought of it, she seemed farther removed from me than ever. She loved me, and the knowledge was ineffably sweet; but it was a love that could have no fruition; and my face darkened as I thought of the man who was to come between us—not only to thwart our love, but also to stand between her and the realisation of the dream and hopes of her life for these people. My heart was as iron towards him; and the bare thought of his foul treachery in this dastardly attempt to have me branded as a coward—for I did not hesitate to accept that theory of his act—filled me with an irresistible impulse to take his life. I recalled his burning words of insult and contumely, and dwelt upon them till they stabbed and pricked and stung me to a madness of passion and loathing.

We reached the little village in good time, and halted at the trysting spot to wait for news from Zoiloff. This was so long in coming that my patience was ebbing fast, until I saw Spernow approaching at a hand gallop.

'All is arranged, Count,' he said, after I had greeted him. 'You are to ride back about half a mile along the road I have come. There is no sign of any interference. But I have something for you.' He drew a small note from his pocket and handed it to me, and turned away to speak to my servant.

I opened it quickly, little guessing the contents:

'I have heard the terrible news of your quarrel with the Duke Sergius, and that you are to meet to-morrow. God preserve you from danger. I am going to ask you the hardest favour that could be put in words. I know of your skill, and of the terrible provocation you have received, but I beg you not to have his death on your soul. Think of what it must mean to us all—to me. For *him* to be killed by *you*. I pray you, for my sake.—CHRISTINA.'

I stared at the lines in a fever of distraction. At the very moment when the cup was at my lips, it was to be dashed away. Just when I had fed my passion, and had been goaded by the remembrance of the man's foul acts and insults to a vow of implacable vengeance, I was to do nothing.

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I could not grant the wish. The man deserved to die, and die he should, if my arm were strong enough. I could not, I would not, let him escape me. He had forced the quarrel, and it must go through. It was a just cause, and I was in the right throughout; and I crushed the paper in my clenched hand and vowed the request was impossible.

Yet how could I face her afterwards and say, 'I had your plea and would not hearken to it!' Was ever man more plagued? I paced up and down the turf fighting the fight between my thirst for vengeance and my love for Christina, with its desire to grant her wish; and never had I fought a harder battle.

My love won, of course. I had no motives in life but those which were inspired by my love for her; and the thought of myself, appearing red-handed before her, and of her turning from me in abhorrence, or gazing at me with eyes of reproach to bid me never see her again, since I cared so little as not to grant her wishes, was unbearable. But it was hard, cruelly hard; and I could have ground my teeth in the stress of my keen disappointment.

I questioned Spernow as we rode together, and he told me that Mademoiselle Broumoff had given him the letter, and that it was to be destroyed as soon as read.

I tore it to shreds and scattered them on the passing wind, with a smile half bitterness, half love; though I would fain have kept the letter near my heart. Then I fell moody and silent. There was more in the request than Christina had foreseen. It was not unlikely to prove my death warrant. To go into a fight with so expert a swordsman as Duke Sergius was dangerous enough under any circumstances and at any time. But to fight him while bound to act only on the defensive, and to refrain, too, from taking advantage of such openings as he might give, magnified the danger many times, and must make the issue less than doubtful for me. The fight was to be to the death, or till one of us was so wounded as to be unable to continue it, and it was clear that, if I was not to attempt to wound him, it was I who must be struck down.

It was certain, too, that so expert a fencer as he would soon perceive that I was not going to press him, and thus he could fight at his ease and wait to pick out the moment when he could most easily plunge his sword into my heart.

If I escaped with my life, too, I had to suffer the humiliation of defeat at his hands; and I groaned in spirit at the bondage which my love imposed.

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And yet I blessed the gentleness, little regardful of me though it was, that had inspired the plea.

When we came in sight of the others, who were already waiting for us, my mind was made up and my decision taken. The Duke should live, even if it cost me my life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FIGHT.

As I dismounted I saluted the others and glanced sharply at the Duke, who feigned not to notice my salute, and looked away without returning it. I hoped I could detect an expression of genuine anxiety on his face, as if he did not at all relish the turn things had taken; and purposely I assumed as dark and stern an expression as I could force into my face. Though I was debarred from killing him, I would at least act as if I meant to.

It did not take much time to select the place and complete the necessary preliminaries, and while I was making ready I drew Zoiloff aside.

'I must have a last word with you, my friend,' I said earnestly. 'Matters have taken a strange turn since I saw you; I have had an urgent request from the Princess not to kill the Duke, and I don't hide from myself that I am now going probably to my death. If I am to act only on the defensive, I can't carry on the fight indefinitely, of course; and, if I fall, I charge you on your honour to let the Princess know that my last thoughts were of her.'

He saw instantly how grave the prospect was, and was more moved than I could have believed.

'We have arranged that it shall be to the death, Count. She had no right to make such a request. Not knowing the conditions, such a request cannot, and must not, be listened to. She cannot wish your death rather than his. Women don't understand these things. You must not be bound.'

'I have reasoned it out in my own way,' I answered, with a smile, 'and I shall observe the condition.'

'By Heaven, I would have had no hand in it at all had I foreseen this. But I suppose she does not wish you to be killed like a sheep, without an effort,' he cried excitedly. 'You can wound him, at any rate. But die you must not. We cannot spare you, Count; she cannot, she does not, know what she asks.'

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'When you think it over calmly you will see she is right. He must not die by my hand, things being as they are.' He knew what I meant, and had no answer to it. He wrung my hand, much affected; and, after a moment, growled into his moustache:

'Hang the women; they spoil everything.'

'Remember,' I said, warningly, 'if things go badly with me, give my message—but no reproaches. She must know nothing except that I was beaten by the Duke's superior skill. On your honour, Zoiloff?'

'On my honour,' he answered; and, as I was ready, we went forward together.

The Duke eyed me with a look of hate, and it was easy to see he meant to do his worst. As our swords crossed, and we engaged. I seemed to feel the thrill of his passion, as if it were an electric current passing through the steel.

He fought well and cleverly, but he was not my match. I had been trained in a better school, and held him at bay without much difficulty. I was much cooler, too, than he; and his fiery temper made him too eager to press the fight.

He made no attempt to wound me slightly, but sought with the vindictiveness of passion to get through my guard and thrust his blade into my heart. My fighting was all defensive; and after a short time my tactics evidently puzzled him. He thought my object was to wear him down. This cooled him, and he began to fight much more warily and cautiously, and with far less waste of energy and strength.

The first point fell to me, partly by accident. Making an over-zealous thrust at my body, which I parried with some difficulty, he came upon my sword point, which just touched his body and drew blood. The seconds interfered; his wound was examined and found to be slight, and we were ordered to re-engage.

In the second bout he changed his tactics, and again attacked me with great impetuosity. The result was what might have been expected. He gave me more than one chance which I could have taken with deadly effect; and when he saw that I did not—for he fenced well enough to understand this—I saw him smile sardonically. He might well wonder why I should wish to spare him. But each time Christina's words were before my eyes and ringing in my ears, and, bitterly though I hated him, I dared not, and would not, kill him. Then he wounded me. He thought he had found the opportunity he sought, and his eyes gleamed

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viciously as he lunged desperately at my heart. I parried the stroke, but not sufficiently, for I felt his sword enter my side, and for a moment I thought all was over.

But when the fight was stopped for the second time it was found that the blow had gone home too high, and had pierced the flesh above the heart, and close under the shoulder. The blood made a brave show, but there was no danger—nothing to prevent my fighting on; and again we had to engage.

It was now with the greatest difficulty that I could restrain myself to act only on the defensive. The triumphant gleam in his eyes when his sword found its way into my body had sent my temper up many degrees. A man of honour, having such skill of fence as he possessed, and seeing that I was making no effort to attack him, and was, indeed, actually letting pass the openings he gave, would have refused to continue a fight on such unequal terms. But he grew more murderous the longer we fought, and more than once made a deliberate use of my reluctance to wound him by exposing himself recklessly in order to try and kill me. He did it deftly and skilfully, with great caution, step by step, as if to assure himself of the fact before he relied and risked too much upon it; but, having satisfied himself, he grew bolder every minute.

It was no better than murder; and, strive as I would, remembering Christina's words and seeking to be loyal to her, I could not stop my rising temper nor check the rapidly growing desire to punish him for his abominable and cowardly tactics. As the intention hardened in my mind, so my fighting changed. My touch grew firmer, more aggressive; I began to press him in my turn, and to show him the dangers that he ran. He read the thought by that subtle instinct which all swordsmen know, and, as my face grew harder and my eyes shone with a more deadly light, I saw him wince, and noted the shadow of fear come creeping over his face and into his eyes. He began to fight without confidence and nervously, dropping the attack and standing like a man at bay.

I pressed him harder and harder, my blood growing ever more and more heated with the excitement of the fight; Christina's words were forgotten; and springing up again in my breast came that deadly resolve of the previous night to kill him. He read it in my face instantly, and it drove him to make one or two desperate and spasmodic attempts to get at me; though I noticed with a grim smile that now he was cautious not to expose himself as before.

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I defeated his attempts without difficulty, and was even in the act of looking out for an opening to strike, when the remembrance of my pledge, and of what my love would say to me if I killed him, shot back into my mind, and at a stroke killed all the desire to kill. The change of mood must in some way have affected my fighting, as we know it will, for I left myself badly guarded, and like a dart of lightning his blade came flashing at me.

I was wounded again; but, fortunately, malice, or fear, or too great glee, made him over-confident, so that his aim was awry, and, instead of piercing my heart, his sword glanced off my ribs, inflicting another flesh wound, but barely more than skin deep.

'This can't go on,' growled Zoiloff in my ear, during the pause. 'You could have killed him half a dozen times. We shall be here all day.' The absurd bathos of the speech made me smile, despite the grim situation, and the smile was still lurking on my face when we crossed swords for the fourth time. A glance at my opponent's face was enough to kill any smile, however; and almost as soon as our blades touched he commenced again to force the fight as though he meant to finish it off quickly. So vehement was his attack, that for a while I needed all my nerve and skill to defend myself; but I contented myself with defensive tactics—for the interval had cooled my temper—until, by a little dastardly, unswordsmanlike trick, he tried to catch me at a disadvantage. In an instant my passion flamed up beyond restraint, and before there was time for me to regain control of my temper, an opening came in his guard, and, unable to stay the fighting instinct to take advantage of it, I ran my sword through his neck.

The blood came gushing out in a full crimson stream from the wound and through his parted lips, dyeing his shirt front; he staggered back, his sword dropped from his nerveless grasp, and he fell to the ground with a groan.

I looked on more than a little aghast at my work. If he should die! And at the thought of the picture of Christina's face as she would meet me flashed before my eyes, and for the moment I would have given all I was worth to have called back that laggard thrust.

Zoiloff and Spernow came and stood by me, as I waited, sword in hand, to know if the fierce combat was to go on still further. Then his chief second crossed to us, and in a formal tone said:

'My principal can fight no longer.'

'Is the hurt dangerous? Will he die?' I asked, and the man glanced at me in evident surprise at the concern in my tone.

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'Not necessarily. The wound is severe, but the doctor says the artery has not been touched. Then after a pause he added, as if in involuntary compliment to the skill I had shown: 'It is surprising that the fight lasted so long, Count Benderoff. I can bear witness that he owes his life to your forbearance.' And with a bow as formal as his tone he went back to the others.

'We may go,' said Zoiloff; and I handed him my sword and then dressed.

'I am glad you wounded him. I feared you were going to let him kill you. He tried his utmost, and you had one very narrow escape,' said Zoiloff. 'But now, where are we to go?'

'I should like first to make quite certain about the nature of his wound. Will you question the surgeon yourself? Spernow and I will wait by the horses.'

'What of your own wounds? Won't you have them dressed? Better run no risks.'

I had almost forgotten them in my excitement, but I agreed; and as soon as the surgeon could be spared from his attendance on the Duke he came and dressed them rapidly. The one was a mere scratch, and the other not by any means serious. I had been lucky indeed to escape so lightly. 'A couple of days' rest for the arm would be enough,' declared the doctor, who was inclined to be garrulous about the affair until he found that I made no response.

When he had finished with me, however, I questioned him as to my opponent's condition. He gave me a learned and technical description of the exact character of the injury, and then in simple and intelligent language told me that in all probability, if the wound healed as it should, the Duke would be a prisoner to his room for two or three weeks; if it healed badly, it might be as many months. But he put his estimate at not more than a month.

'There is no danger of his death?' I asked.

'Not the least, unless he is imprudent. In a month's time he should be quite able to fight another duel should he feel so disposed.'

I saw no wit in so grim a pleasantry, for he intended it as such, and turned away with a hasty word of thanks for his attention.

'Where to?' asked Zoiloff when we were mounted.

'Back to Sofia,' I answered promptly. 'I am going straight to General Kolfort to ascertain the meaning of last night's attempt on me;' and I clapped my heels into my horse's flanks and started at a sharp pace for the city.

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CHAPTER XIX.

MY ARREST.

I HAD not ridden more than a couple of miles towards the city when a thought occurred to me and caused me to draw rein suddenly and call to my companions to halt.

'Anything wrong?' asked Zoiloff, looking about him anxiously.

'It has just occurred to me that, as I'm going to put my head into the lion's mouth by going to General Kolfort, I had better not go unprepared, and I have just thought of a precaution I can take.'

'What is it?'

'I can't at present explain to you fully, but you or Spernow can help me. I must find some place before I enter Sofia where I can write for an hour or two. Where can I go?'

He thought a moment, and said:

'The safest place would be back to where you passed the night. I am sure of those people, and they know how to hold their tongues;' and, changing our direction, we set set off for the house at a brisk trot.

My intention was to write out a full report now for the British Foreign Office, giving a detailed account of the position of matters in regard to the Russian scheme, of the part I had played in it, and of what I believed to be the Russian designs against me. I did not forget the condition that if I failed the Foreign Office were to be at liberty to disown me, and that the whole and sole responsibility of my present action lay with me, let the consequences be what they might. But I calculated that so far I had kept aloof from committing the Government in any way, and could thus claim the protection of the Foreign Office should any personal violence be contemplated by old Kolfort.

I thought out carefully what I had to say, and when we arrived at the house set to work with a will. I gave a clear description of the Princess's counterplot, and then added my reason for believing that, although it was likely to fail now, it could yet be used for the advantage of Bulgaria and the Balkan States generally. The Prince had decided to abdicate, and if measures could be taken from Downing Street to have a successor to him ready, whether that successor should be Princess Christina or another, and the abdication so timed as to fit in with such a plan, it would be perfectly feasible to checkmate the Russian move.

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My own opinion, I declared, was in favour of putting the Princess on the throne, thus apparently acting in co-operation and concert with Russia, while at the same time taking secret measures to prevent any marriage on her part with a Russian ally.

For myself, I asked merely that, in the event of my being imprisoned by General Kolfort, the British representative in Bulgaria might be instructed by telegraph to press either for my being liberated or brought to trial. No more to be done than would be done in the case of an ordinary British subject.

When I had completed the despatch, I drafted a telegram announcing that it was on its way, and I instructed my companions how they were to act. Spernow was to take the work in hand, and to push on now for the Servian frontier, and take the train there for Nish, where I knew there was a particularly energetic British Consul. If no communication reached Spernow from me within twenty-four hours of his arrival at Nish he was to send off the despatch by the quickest available means, and twenty-four hours later—so as to allow enough time to elapse to prevent the letter being intercepted—the telegram was to follow. Then Spernow was to return in hot haste to Sofia to report to Zoiloff. He undertook the commission very readily, asking only that Mademoiselle Broumoff should be told of the reason for his absence, and that Zoiloff should arrange the difficulties of getting him leave of absence from his regiment.

Zoiloff and I then resumed our ride to Sofia, discussing very earnestly the new development of our affairs and the possibilities which lay ahead of my interview with the General.

I scarcely thought he would venture to imprison me, resolute and ruthless as he was in pressing his policy; and I said as much to Zoiloff, who was, however, more doubtful.

'In any case it must make no difference to our scheme,' I said. 'You must push on without me, and hurry forward all the preparations with the utmost despatch. I should like you to see the Princess and explain to her precisely what has happened this morning, although you need know nothing of her message to me.'

'I understand,' he said drily; 'but I should like to warn her against imperilling a valuable life when she doesn't know the facts. It may be my turn next—who knows?'

'You would act as I did, my friend,' I replied, smiling; 'I know you.'

'Well, the conditions would never be the same,' he said bluntly; and I did not pursue the point any further.

When we reached Sofia we parted.

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'How shall I know what happens at the General's?' he asked.

'If you do not hear from me, you may draw your own conclusion that I am on my way to Tirnova. If we are not to meet again—good-bye;' and I held out my hand.

He grasped it warmly, and with a ring of true stalwart friendship he said: 'If they shut you up, it'll go hard with me if I don't find you. And if they kill you, you have my oath on it you sha'n't go unavenged, if I have to shoot that infernal old ruffian with my own hand. It shall be life for life.' And without another word, as though he did not wish me to see how much he was moved, he clapped his heels into his horse's flanks and cantered off.

I avoided my own house purposely, lest some of the General's agents should be waiting there for me, for I wished it to be unmistakably clear that my interview with the General was by my own choice; and I did not draw rein till I had reached the courtyard of his house. Then, telling Markov to wait for me with the horses in the street, I entered the house and asked for General Kolfort.

I could see that my visit caused surprise, and observed that one or two of the soldiers present made haste to post themselves so that my retreat would be impossible. I was shown upstairs into the room where I had first seen the General, and where, as usual, one or two officers were lounging. I was kept there about half an hour—quite long enough to irritate me—and then a messenger ushered me into the General's room.

He looked even harder and grimmer and sterner than ever as he glanced up from his desk and fixed his eyes on me.

'What is your business with me?' he asked curtly.

'That is the question I have come to put to you,' I retorted, quite as shortly.

'Why to me?'

'Because I have heard, not quite incidentally, that you have been sending to my house to inquire for me.'

'You appear to have been called away suddenly.'

'Driven away, I should say rather,' I retorted. 'May I ask why you have dared to make such an attempt?'

'Dared?' he returned, with a flash of his eyes at the word.

'Dared,' I repeated.

'I am not answerable to you for the steps taken in the exigencies of State.'

'Exigencies of State you term it. A singular name to describe an act which in plain terms means that when one of your

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chief men has forced a quarrel on me and challenged me, you would shut me up to prevent our meeting, so that he might have an opportunity of branding me as a coward.'

'I do not think you a coward,' he answered slowly.

'Nor does your Duke Sergius, now,' said I.

This touched him, for he asked with evident interest: 'What has happened this morning? A good deal may turn on your answer.'

'He is not dead, if that's what you mean—only badly wounded;' and I gave him a brief description of the fight. He listened closely, but without a sign of his feelings on his face.

'You seem to suggest that you could have killed him,' he said with half a sneer.

'His own second said as much to me, and offered to bear witness to the fact that he owed his life to my forbearance.'

'A very tactful forbearance. And why did you spare him? From what I hear, there is little love lost between you—at least, in the common sense of the term,' he added drily.

'I had my reasons, and they are my own, if you please. But now will you tell me the reason for your conduct?'

'I do not consider it safe for you to be any longer at large.'

The answer was given deliberately, and after a pause. It showed that his intention was to imprison me; but I would not let him see the unpleasant effect of the decision. I smiled and shrugged my shoulders.

'And your reasons?' I asked.

'I am not accustomed to discuss reasons with prisoners.'

'Yet you will have to state them in my case. Englishmen can't be packed away like herrings in a barrel to suit even your convenience.'

'You are no Englishman, Count Benderoff.'

'On the contrary, I am a British subject, General Kolfort, and am resolved to claim my rights as one.'

He waved the words aside as though they were of no account.

'I warned you when you first came here——'

'When you lured me here, you mean,' I corrected.

'That you would have to choose in which character I was to deal with you. Had you chosen then to stand on your British nationality—which, by the way, I question entirely—I should have known how to deal with you. Instead of dealing frankly with me, you chose to remain in Sofia, mixing yourself up with intrigues against me, and doing other ridiculous things, until I repeat I cannot any longer allow you to remain at large. I shall

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send you to Tirnova, that you may have time to cool your inconvenient passions and clear your head.'

'Very well, I am content to go. It will be an excellent illustration for the guidance of Europe as to Russian policy in the Balkans.'

'When Europe hears of it,' he returned significantly.

I blessed my prudence as I thought of the despatch I had sent by Spernow, and at the thought a smile flitted across my face. He stared at me in some doubt, not understanding my confidence.

'I am afraid you think I am only a short-sighted fool, after all, General.'

'I have not formed a very high opinion of your foresight. I know you to be brave and hold you to be clever in your way; but a little longer foresight would have shown you that such an ending as this was inevitable when you decided to meddle with politics here and to act as my secret opponent.'

I began to wonder how much he knew of our plans.

'I did not so lack foresight as to come to this meeting unprepared, at any rate,' said I, significantly. 'And if you throw me into one of your confounded prisons, the news will soon be buzzing in every Foreign Office in Europe that Englishmen must be deprived of their liberty in order to prove Russia's devotion to the cause of freedom in the Balkans.' I threw the words at him recklessly, and all his self-restraint could not help his showing that the blow went home. He had not expected this.

'I don't believe you,' he said bluntly.

'So much the worse for you; but if you were a younger man, General Kolfort, you would not dare to say that to my face,' I added, sternly.

'You will find it no easy task to get your news out of Bulgaria.'

'If I had not known it was already safe across the frontier, do you think I should have been fool enough to come here;' and I laughed and shrugged my shoulders, enjoying his embarrassment. Then I pushed my advantage. 'But now, I am ready for your men. Where are you sending me? Tirnova?' And I got up as though the prison were immaterial to me.

He didn't relish the piece of bluff, and sat silent and uneasy.

'You can sit down again,' he said after a pause.

I threw myself carelessly into my chair again, crossed my legs, glanced at my watch and said, lightly:

'Tirnova's over a hundred and twenty miles as the crow flies, and if you have any regard for my health—which, by the way, may

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be an important matter to you by-and-by—we'd better make a start. I'm wounded, and a long journey might have a very bad effect upon me.'

He threw me a glance of baffled rage; I saw his lips move, and guessed that a pretty little oath had slipped out into his moustache unchristened.

'If you mean to brave me out, your journey may be a much farther and a much quicker one,' he said after a pause. 'Mistakes have been made before now, and explained afterwards.'

'Mistake and murder are both spelt with an M,' I said recklessly. 'But a murdered Englishman is not by any means easy to explain away.'

A long tense silence followed. He broke it by asking abruptly, seeking to catch me unawares:

'What's this I hear about your love for the Princess Christina?'

'How on earth can I know what your spies or my enemies tell you?' I replied, not for a moment off my guard.

'Do you dream of making her your wife?'

'Hasn't she promised to marry the Duke Sergius?'

'Is it true that you love her?'

'If it were you are scarcely the man to whom I should bring such a confidence.'

'What's your object here in Sofia?'

'To be allowed to mind my own business.'

'What is that business, as you call it?'

'My own concern,' I retorted as sharply as I could rap out the words. It was as clear as daylight that I had touched him with my threat, or he would never continue to question me. I was winning.

'What does your Government want?' he asked, after a pause to recover from his chagrin at my former replies.

'How should I know—except to have their subjects left unmolested?' I was determined to rub this in, and I could see he relished this last rub no better than the first.

'If you refuse to answer my questions you leave me but one alternative,' he threatened.

'Take it,' I answered lightly. 'You take it, of course, with your eyes open.'

'You have been engaged in a conspiracy against the Russian influence?'

'I have been engaged in that conspiracy carried on In the Name of a Woman, if that's what you mean; and, as you are

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perfectly aware, with not only your consent, but approval and encouragement.'

'You have been working secretly for another object,' he cried angrily.

'Are you accusing the Princess Christina of treachery?'

'Your tongue is as skilful in fence as your sword,' he said, smiling grimly. 'But you know my meaning perfectly.'

'Then pack me off to Tirnova—if you think you have proof to prove the unprovable; and at the same time show your hand to the rest of Europe. No, no, General Kolfort,' I said, smiling and shaking my head, as though the thing were no more than a jest, 'that cock won't fight, and you know it.'

'I regard you and can deal with you as a renegade Bulgarian officer conspiring against your Prince; a crime that merits imprisonment.'

'Very good and plausible, no doubt—were it not for the precaution that I have taken to let people in London know differently. But if that's to be your line, we shall have the gaols pretty full here, and you and I, General, will be able to resume our interesting conferences, hobnobbing in one of them on more equal terms than here;' and I wagged my head at him again.

The taunt enraged him. His eyes flashed fire, and a flush of wrath tinged his dried, wrinkled, parchment cheeks. He sprang to his feet and sounded the bell on his table furiously.

'I will put your devil-may-care humour to the test. You shall go to Tirnova.'

'As you please,' I answered, surprised now in my turn, for I had not thought he would dare to push matters to extremes. 'I will tell you one thing. My arrest will be the signal for that despatch to be forwarded. If I do not go to Tirnova, that will not go to London.'

'I care nothing for your Government,' he exclaimed, all self-control gone in his anger. 'They dare do nothing, even if they would.'

At that moment an officer entered in response to the bell.

'Arrest the Count Benderoff,' cried the General, pointing at me a finger that trembled with rage. 'Give up your sword, sir. You are a traitor, unworthy to bear it.'

'I shall do nothing of the kind,' I said desperately. 'The man who lays a hand on me may look to himself.'

'Call in your men, Captain. If he resists, shoot him,' said the stern old man grimly, and in the moments of waiting we looked at each other in silent defiance. Then came the tramp of

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men and the clash of arms in the room without, and a file of soldiers marched in.

'I must ask you for your sword, Count Benderoff,' said the officer, quietly and courteously. 'You will see resistance is useless.'

For a moment I still resisted and refused.

'I beg you to save trouble,' he said again.

'I will not,' I cried furiously. 'If I am to be murdered, it shall be done here, in the presence of my murderer;' and I set my back to the wall and whipped out my sword.

'Shoot him down!' shouted the infuriated old man to the soldiers, who levelled their guns dead at me. 'Now, will you give up your sword?'

'No, I'll die first, you butcher!' I exclaimed, setting my teeth.

'Do your duty, Captain,' said the inflexible old martinet.

'Count Benderoff, let me make another request,' he said, daring even the General's displeasure in his reluctance to give the command.

'No; you shall butcher me here.'

A moment of terrible strain followed, and then in the room without the sounds of some confusion were heard, and an exclamation of surprise from one or two of the men there. Quick, light steps fled across to the room where we stood.

'Shut that door,' cried the General.

But the order was too late, and the Princess Christina came rushing in, her face deathly white with alarm at what she saw, while with the quickness of thought she placed herself between me and the soldiers who covered me with their muskets.

(*To be continued.*)

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At the Sign of the Ship.

WHY WAS LYON HERALD BURNED?

WHATEVER may be said against the study of history as a dull pursuit, even the most advanced critic ought to admit that history is full of plots for novels. Just as rivers, according to the engineer, exist to fill navigable canals, so history is studied by harmless drudges to furnish plots for historical romances. You find a situation, a problem, a puzzle, and you write a novel to explain it. Who will explain to me why Sir William Stewart, 'Lord Lyon King-at-Arms,' was burned, as a wizard, at St. Andrews, on August 16, 1569? The office of Lyon has ever been highly respectable. If these lines fall beneath the eye of the present Lyon, perhaps he can solve my enigma. I offer my own theory of the riddle. Sir William Stewart was Ross Herald, and carried letters, in a dignified way, from Queen Mary to Queen Elizabeth. After Bothwell fled to Denmark, and was 'wanted' for the murder of Darnley, Sir William was sent to the Danish king with a request for the extradition of the wicked Earl. But

On no condition
Was extradition

allowed in this case. Sir William then reached the height of his profession and was made Lyon Herald. So far all was well; he was trusted by Queen Mary's enemies, who were in power.

* * *

In July and August, 1568, a plot to murder the Regent Murray was discovered or invented. On August 14 one Patrick Hepburn, natural son of the Bishop of Murray and cousin to Bothwell, was captured by Ruthven and Lindsay at Scone. He is usually called 'the Parson of Kynnoir.' Being examined, probably tortured, he implicated, among others, Sir William, the Lyon Herald. Sir William took refuge in Dumbarton Castle,

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which was held for Queen Mary, and against the Regent Murray, by Lord Flemyng. David Lindsay was now made Lyon Herald, and in August 1569 Sir William was caught and put in Edinburgh Castle. About July 1569 Murray 'caused burn certain witches in St. Andrews.' He was fond, as a good Protestant, of burning witches. John Knox shared the same predilection. While they had been freely burned on the Catholic continent, for some reason Catholic Scotland had troubled them little, but when martyrs were out, after the Scottish Reformation, witches were in. Sir William Stewart was next taken from prison in Edinburgh Castle to St. Andrews, and there, on August 16, 1569, 'being convicted for witchcraft, was burned,' while Paris, a servant of Bothwell, was hanged for Darnley's murder.

* * *

Now, why was Stewart, originally arrested on a charge of conspiring, or concealing a conspiracy, to slay the Regent Murray, finally burned on another charge—that of witchcraft? The answer may perhaps be found in a letter of this poor Lyon Herald to 'the most merciful Regent,' written in Edinburgh Castle, on August 5, 1569. It is in the British Museum, and is published by Mr. Bain, in his new volume of the *Calendar of Scottish Papers* (ii. 665). The Lyon says that he is charged with partaking in, or at least concealing, a conspiracy; but that is not the crime for which he was burned. He writes: 'Though concealment of treason deserves punishment, yet, till the principal devisers are tried and convicted, I cannot be accused.' That is common sense, whether it was law or not, and the principal devisers of the scheme never were accused or tried. But Stewart had to be got rid of, so his enemies made sorcery the crime. Stewart says that the rumour of a plot to murder the Regent was public property, 'was tossed up and down at Edinburgh,' and was imparted to himself by Bothwell's cousin, the Parson of Kynnoir, on July 21. 'I do not know if I durst have disclosed it to your Grace.' The danger of disclosure was great. First, the Lyon would have incurred the feud of the intending murderers; next, he might be tortured to make him prove his charge (for which he had only the word of the Parson of Kynnoir), or might be challenged to single combat by that scoundrel. The dilemma was common in those days. Morton confessedly knew of Darnley's murder beforehand, and probably the Earl of Murray also knew. Both held their peace. Again, Stewart says that he did not

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believe the Parson's story. The people whom the Parson mentioned as conspiring would not contemplate so vile a murder, 'and I am assured that your Grace, *knowing their names*, will praise my bypast taciturnity.' Murray knew the names, yet, in place of accusing the conspirators, he burned the Herald!

* * *

Stewart goes on to add another reason for his disbelief; and now, I think, he gave Murray a fatal handle. 'You are in no danger but from domestical treason, and if you think my opinion vain, I do not. For he that told me foretold so many true things that I must believe him—*e.g.* the slaughter of the Queen's husband; the ruin and forfeiture of Earl Bothwell; not only my last voyage, but where and why I made it; the death of Lyon Herald and my promotion; the Queen's deliverance' (from Loch Leven), 'and your Grace's victory at Langside, and other predictions which have proved true. Why, then, should I distrust him in this?' 'This' is the prediction that Murray was not in danger from the Parson's conspiracy; so that Stewart blamelessly concealed what he heard of *that* conspiracy, knowing, on the strength of prophecy, that it would come to nothing. Stewart then adds that he had long before given this same reason for disbelief to 'a certain courtier,' who found him sceptical as to the rumoured plot to slay the Regent. He next asserts his hatred of all treason: he even thinks it unlawful 'to resist tyrants or usurpers, how wicked soever they be, following the holy writings of Daniel and Jeremy, prophets, of Paul, Peter, and others, or, in matters of religion, to resist the magistrate.' Here the unlucky man may have irritated Knox, who thought that 'the magistrate' must be resisted, in matters of religion, if a Catholic. Stewart can only reveal what was said about the conspiracy to Murray himself, whom he reminds that, being now 'no private man,' he ought not to resent private injuries.

* * *

He 'sought grace at a graceless face.' Murray did nothing to the alleged conspirators. Either he did not believe in their guilt, or they were too powerful to be attacked. But Stewart, in self-defence, had confessed to listening to a prophet: possibly a familiar spirit, or a talking table. Therefore the Herald was a sorcerer, wizard, or warlock, and so he was caught out, and was burned at St. Andrews. We are still left to guess at the real cause of Murray's inveterate hatred of the Lyon Herald. Did he

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merely want his office, to give to a Lindsay? As a semi-sacred official, and, as a Stewart, the Herald is not a likely man to have been in a murder plot. It was not from the Stewart Clan, headed then by Lennox; but from Bothwell's Hepburns, and from the Hamiltons (who presently shot him), that Murray was in peril. Thus the mystery remains a mystery at bottom, but we can see why the charge of sorcery was pressed, as it was determined to kill Stewart on one accusation or another. Knox might and did prophesy, but amateurs in prediction, and those who consulted them, were to be burned. Strange old times were these, when burnings of men and women were as common at St. Andrews, on the knoll above the Royal and Ancient Club House, as school treats are to-day. I rather think that the Lyon's burning was at the time of the yearly fair, and added to the attractions of that popular holiday. The lads and lasses from the country farms would see Paris hanged, and Stewart cremated alive, and then go back to their dances behind the Town Kirk. But I doubt if dates fit; the fair is now held on the second Tuesday in each August.

* * *

The world never has known anything of its greatest men, and never will, I suppose. This nescience is illustrated by the case of two writers on Art, Mr. John Ruskin and Mr. R. A. M. Stevenson, the former famous, the latter less renowned. My personal knowledge of both critics was slight, but, to me at least, agreeable. I cannot doubt that they would each have found the other a most pleasant companion: their interests were similar to some extent, and, if their opinions differed, that would only have added to the piquancy of their intercourse. Without desiring to brawl and wrangle, I do think that conversation in which everybody 'says ditto to' everybody is a little saltless. I am not a partisan of those talkers who habitually give the lie, from an old-fashioned prejudice against that method of indicating a difference of opinion. But perpetual assent and unanimity is decidedly 'vara flat,' as Paley said, and was not likely to occur in conversation between Mr. Ruskin and Mr. R. A. M. Stevenson, who, perhaps, never met.

* * *

These remarks have their occasion in some statements about Mr. Stevenson, in an essay of Mr. Henley's.[1] Mr. Henley says

[1] *Pall Mall Magazine*, July 1900, pp. 423–427.

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that, 'till Mr. Stevenson came,' 'Art-criticism, so called, was a raging and terrific business.' In these distant years, I also, much against the grain, was 'an art-critic.' The task was only alleviated by meeting Mr. Stevenson and others, on Press view days, or by mocking the works that hung upon the walls of the galleries. According to Mr. Henley, before Mr. Stevenson came (*enfin, Malherbe vint!*), 'Ruskin, for instance, uplifted his voice, and tenored nonsense, nonsense all the time, for many years and through interminable volumes, about Turner, Constable, Rembrandt, Angelico, Carpaccio, William Hunt—the Lord knows who . . . .' Personally, I know nothing about Art, but I like to see the pictures of the gentlemen named; and I have often thought that Mr. Ruskin's observations on them were those of a meritorious and ingenious, though eloquent, Master of Arts. Mr. Henley, on the other hand, will not call 'such literary exercises as *Modern Painters* and the rest henceforth impossible, for to say that were to say that I believe for one thing in the disappearance of the Fool,' a belief which would imply an element of credulity. But it seems that Mr. Stevenson was the great man whom this world did not know much about, whereas Mr. Ruskin (about whom the world must know a good deal if it reads Mr. Spielmann, Mrs. Meynell, and Mr. Marshall Mather) merely 'tenored nonsense, nonsense, all the time.' I have not seen Mrs. Meynell's *John Ruskin* (Blackwood & Sons), nor am I likely to read it, for I have read Mr. Ruskin, and that is enough on that subject. But this lady does not seem to hold, with Mr. Henley, that Mr. Ruskin merely 'tenored nonsense.' Thus the *Athenæum* says, 'Here at last is—at least often—the woman's sweet ordering and gentle decision; we have at stages a sense even of the ideal Helpmate in the vestal temple. . . .' I do not precisely understand this remark, as the Vestals in the vestal temple were not allowed to be helpmates; nay, were burned alive if they undertook that office. However, Mr. Ruskin is at the bottom of the trouble, for *he* seems to have called the home 'a vestal temple,' which, of course, is absurd. The youngest daughter looked after the Hearth, but that is another affair. (Here I do not offer an excursus of twenty-five pages on the worship of Hestia, because the Editor would never stand it.) But it is plain that Mrs. Meynell and the *Athenæum* do not entirely share Mr. Henley's theory of Ruskin, and have quite other views about what the *Athenæum* nobly calls 'the external humility and wonder of grass.' Grass, poor thing, *is* humble. Tom Morris eternally spreads 'mair sand' on it

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(which would take the pride out of any vegetable), and, no doubt, the grass 'eternally wonders' *why*?—a frame of mind shared by many golfers. 'The difficulty of summarising, as it were, a spirit like Ruskin's,' says the *Athenæum*, 'is painfully obvious.' Probably it is; I never, myself, tried to summarise a spirit like Ruskin's, even if there are any such spirits, which I doubt. But then Mr. Henley finds the operation perfectly easy: Ruskin 'tenored nonsense, nonsense'; there is a summary of a spirit! Where this difference of opinion about Art and the criticism of art not only exists, but is expressed with eloquence and candour, what is a plain man to do? Mrs. Meynell thinks, it seems, that Mr. Ruskin's work 'may be likened to a sidereal sky beheld from an earth upon the wing.' This is at the opposite pole from Mr. Henley's opinion that Mr. Ruskin merely 'tenored nonsense through interminable volumes.' Is there, then, no *via media*? Mr. Stevenson, we are told, 'hated emphasis.' Probably he thought that there was a happy medium; that Mr. Ruskin's books were neither pure bosh, nor yet, in the world of intellect, an exact analogue to the starry heavens. Mr. Henley ought to know Mr. Stevenson's opinion. 'I was long as close to him as his shirt,' he says. I was far from enjoying that degree of intimacy. And yet I venture to guess that, as regards the value of Mr. Ruskin's works, Mr. Stevenson neither thought them mere nonsense, nor yet in any way akin to the sidereal sky. For my own part, I shall venture to remain in the belief that Mr. Ruskin's books are by no means devoid of merit, though, as regards his essays in Mythology, he certainly seems rather enthusiastic than scientific.

* * *

Everyone ought to make a stand against the extraordinary profession which pursues literature vicariously. Thus a person writes to me, from the office of a popular periodical, asking for assistance in compiling an essay on Collaboration. Do I like better to collaborate or work alone? Do I have many disputes with my fellow toiler? Now on what grounds does this person ask me and others to help to make up 'a page of interesting facts'? If the facts are interesting, I may as well earn half a crown by writing them myself, and give that half-crown to the person who asks for it. And to whom are the facts 'interesting'? If the readers of such matter have heard my name, it is as much as they have done. They do not and cannot read books, and why

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should they care whether I 'have more pleasure in writing my books alone or in collaboration'? If I and my friends have 'disputes,' are we likely to take this public into our confidence? The only way to alleviate this plague of tattle is to refuse to add to the 'pages of interesting facts.' There is no reason for answering; there is not even the advantage of an Advertisement, that glittering phantom minnow at which so many authors bite eagerly.

* * *

One point in the Boer character puzzles me. Are they not so very brave, or are they not so very veracious? They seldom have lost more, in any encounter, than one killed and three wounded, whereas we publish our own heavy losses in full detail. Well, if the Boers have hardly any losses worth naming, why do they occasionally—not advance? And on the other hand, if they fail to advance, because their losses are heavy, why do they not say so frankly? If they are really all but invulnerable, or if our men never happen to shoot straight, then the Boers need no great pluck, for all men are brave where there is no danger, or almost all.

* * *

The reader who would see those dilemmas at their best should study Mr. Easton's 'Within the Boer Lines,' in *Harper's Magazine* for July. He recounts, to his sympathetic American audience, the 'atrocities' committed by our Lancers at Elandslaagte. In all wars such stories are told, and even so we hear, from the United States, tales about mobs of free voters who burn negroes alive. These things, of course, never occur: they are the inventions of the negro press. In the same way the yarns about Boerish or British cruelty may cancel each other. The Boers never fire at us under flags of truce; and we did not spear poor wounded Boers, who, again, never, never fired at persons attending to their wants. Such is my impression.

* * *

Mr. Easton has other things to tell. 'About 700 English' (*about*), on December 10, were held at bay, by how many Boers do you suppose? 'Why, by Four (4).' The seven hundred (about) 'surrounded' the Four, and demanded their surrender. But the four killed seventeen Britons ere they nobly died, on December 10, 1899. 'This was the last sortie attempted from Ladysmith;'

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and I do not wonder at it. On our side, I think something was said about destroying a gun or two; probably this was a myth of ours: Mr. Easton does not allude to it.

* * *

The inexplicable thing is that the Boers, though almost invulnerable, and so brave that Four can hold seven hundred, yet did not capture Ladysmith, or even poor little Mafeking, with its starving defenders. This is an insoluble mystery. With all their heroic valour (which I frankly admit), and though the Deity was repeatedly said, in official Boer reports, to have 'wrought miracles for the Burghers,' yet they did not like attacking General Baden-Powell. President Kruger, Mr. Easton tells us, 'declared that the protecting hand of Providence was with the Boers,' as was proved by their scanty casualties. Thus, with 6,500 English against 750 Boers, at Elandslaagte, we only took eighty-seven prisoners. But what did King Padella say to Giglio? 'If your Majesty has a fairy horse, fairy armour, and a fairy sword, where is the use of my fighting you?' With all their advantages of a supernormal kind, the Boers, who were panting to assault Ladysmith—'they illy concealed their desire to storm the city,'—really might have attacked that congregation of doomed men. But, says Mr. Easton, 'General Joubert had formulated a plan,' and the Boers suppressed their noble ardour: except on November 9 and January 6.

* * *

We cannot always check statements like Mr. Easton's, especially as to numbers; but here is one which we can check. Mr. Winston Churchill 'was released by order of General Joubert, after being held a prisoner in Pretoria for a few weeks.' Then either Mr. Churchill did not know it, or his account of his escape is indeed mythical. He did not escape at all, you see: he was 'released by order of General Joubert.' Who dares write the history of past ages, when authorities differ so much about the living present? Possibly Mr. Churchill can settle this point with Mr. Easton, to their common satisfaction.

* * *

Here is another gem: 'After three desperate and bloody battles in attempting to relieve the garrison at Kimberley, Lord Methuen's column had been completely demoralised by General Cronje, *and compelled to fall back to Belmont.*' Now if any one

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thing seemed certain, it is that Lord Methuen, after his defeat at Magersfontein, did not 'fall back to Belmont,' but remained at Modder River. If I am lying, it is on the strength of official and press bulletins, which, for many weeks, were dated from the Modder, not from Belmont. 'I would not lie if it were ever so, like Mr. Facey Rumford, but I may be misinformed: like Mr. Churchill, who thinks that he made an escape in picturesque circumstances. As to the invulnerability of our gallant adversaries, I incline rather to attribute it to the fact that they were usually out of sight, than to any miraculous interference with the order of the universe. Mr. Easton prints a very pleasing picture of a Transvaal lady 'who fought beside her husband at the Tugela.' There was a horrid story of the death of such a lady in the trenches, but we had hoped that it was untrue; and it was denied. The illustration appears to be from a drawing, not from a photograph, and I trust that the lady is still wearing her becoming costume.

* * *

I want to be hypnotised instantly! In the same rich number of *Harper's* Mr. John D. Quackenbos induces me to suppose that, if Mr. Crockett, say, would kindly hypnotise me, I might become a popular novelist. 'Not only does the subject share the latent knowledge, but he borrows as well the mental tone of the operator.' The mental tone, that is what I need, not that I object to sharing the latent knowledge. My own mental tone is unpopular; and I would fain be hypnotised by somebody who has a popular mental tone, say Mr. Guy Boothby. 'Not only may dull minds be polished . . . the matured mind of the scholar may be clothed with perceptive faculty,' and also with 'unerring taste.' 'The state of hypnosis would seem to prove that we have within us an immaterial principle, entirely independent of sense organs and sense acquisitions.' What a pity that, in a state of hypnosis, people are usually made merely to play the buffoon. 'Nebular knowledge is of little avail.' What *is* nebular knowledge, and why is it of less avail than other sorts? Can Mr. Quackenbos mean nebulous knowledge? There is a difference.

* * *

Howard P——, aged ten, was a very bad boy. 'Merciless castigation' only aroused his ambition, as it were. He was hypnotised, told to be virtuous, and became a pattern. Lady

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novelists and lady musicians appear to find that hypnotism, at the hands of Mr. Quackenbos, improves their exercises in their chosen arts. But till a few males are turned into popular novelists by hypnotism, I think that I shall defer the promising experiment in my own case.

* * *

Dr. Andrew Wilson and I do not always agree, so I am happy to 'say ditto' to his article, in *The Illustrated London News*, on Mrs. Piper, of Boston, Massachusetts. Dr. Wilson does not think that this lady receives communications from spirits of the dead, and I am entirely at one with him. But as he rather leans to an opinion that she does get information, like the Lyon Herald, in some uncanny and unknown way, though I again agree with him, I warn him that this is a dangerous and tottering attitude. Once admit 'telepathy' as a fact 'in brain science,' and you never can tell where you may end. You may become a scientific heretic, and, if not exactly burned, you may be 'roasted,' as our fathers said, meaning 'chaffed.' Has Dr. Wilson the courage of a martyr?

ANDREW LANG.

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The Editor of LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE,
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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER 1900.

One of Ourselves.[1]

BY L. B. WALFORD,

AUTHOR OF 'MR. SMITH,' &c.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

CHAPTER XXV.

'NO, SIR, NOT THAT WAY.'

'IS it late?' said Poll, looking calmly round in answer to a breathless apology. 'I didn't know. Do look here, Bet'—she was hanging over a basin and had what servants term 'a mess' all round her on the table. 'This is such fun; Mary has been teaching me to dry sea-weeds; you wouldn't believe it, but that girl is a perfect genius. She has got a whole book full of them, and you never saw anything more beautifully done. When it got too dark for me to go on drawing I was sitting here, and she came in, and saw ours lying about and—oh, Bet, how wet you are!'

'It is nothing. I will run up and change.'

'You will find a fire in your room. Mrs. Lightfoot came in too, and when she heard you were out in this thick mist she sent Mary to light it. She did, indeed, of her own accord.'

'How nice of her!' said Bet, cordially. 'I am all right, but my clothes are rather penetrated. Shan't be a moment'—running off.

Even Poll, absorbed in her new toy, noticed the run. 'Her walk has done her good,' thought she; 'but I must clear away before she comes back.' And she rang up Mary, and had all out of sight in a trice.

She was to be surprised, however.

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'Now, if you will show me how,' said Bet, coming down with the same quick step. 'I don't mind helping—oh, where is it all gone?'—looking round. 'Is it tea-time? Can it be tea-time?'

'Very much tea-time; aren't you hungry? I am, now that I come to think about it. Why, Bet, you look quite freshened up. I almost wish I had gone out too, but——'

'You were just as well in the house. A sea-fog does not suit you as it does me.'

She looked as if it had suited her. Upstairs she had laughed to herself as she sought to compose the tell-tale sparkle of her eye, the radiant glow which overspread every feature, vowing that she must not stop to think lest thinking should but increase what ought to be concealed; while even now she stood with her back to the lamp, till, the meal being ready, that attitude became untenable.

Tea passed sociably, conversation being kept to the seaweeds, and no sooner was it over than Bet would have the basin out again. 'It is just the thing for to-night,' pronounced she.

'And to-morrow night we shall have some more,' said Poll, well pleased. 'We can collect in the daytime, and——' But Bet heard no more. 'To-morrow night?'

She looked at Poll curiously. Poor Pollkins would be alone to-morrow night, and would not perhaps care about her seaweeds, but she would have something else so startling and exciting to occupy her thoughts that she would not mind.

Some plan must be devised to keep Poll from worrying during the day. 'Oh, you are mixing those two that I kept so carefully apart!'—cried Poll. 'Oh, do be more careful, Bet! Now you have torn it;' reproachfully.

Bet perceived she must attend.

'It won't show, once stuck on to the paper. You see I had not Mary to teach me,' explained she, humbly. 'But, I assure you, it won't show. Now for some more'—plunging both hands into the pile.

'Oh, they are dropping all over the table-cloth!' cried Poll, afresh. 'And I promised Mrs. Lightfoot we would not wet the table-cloth.'

Bet's handkerchief vehemently mopped the table-cloth.

'Suppose you make the paper ready?' was Poll's further suggestion. Paper could not be sprinkled and splashed about.

But it could be snipped and wasted, and had indeed to be

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picked up from here, there, and everywhere when the evening was over, and Bet, jumping up as ten o'clock struck, said Mary could sweep up what remained into her dustpan next morning, for she was going to bed and Poll was to go too.

'But you will remember, Bet, these belong to me? They are really all of them *my* seaweeds,' quoth Poll, obeying. Something in the manner of her claim reminded Bet of the 'Billy' who was Poll's 'Billy;' and for the moment she would have liked to say something, some little thing, make some reference to that old, forgotten day, but prudence prevailed. It was too long since a jesting allusion to William Farrell in ever so slight a form had passed for one now to drop easily from her lips.

'You know you can get some for yourself to-morrow,' appended Poll, innocently; and again 'to-morrow' echoed Bet in her heart.

But she fought against a little shiver at the word. To-morrow might be rather a trying day, a hard day to get through—'though why it should be I don't know,' she battled with herself—but, at any rate, long ere it closed, she would be able to explain all, and even Lionel would not blame her.

It was a comfort that Lionel need know nothing till he got this explanation. Poll the simple would be easily satisfied, but Lionel and Georgie would have known the truth, whatever face it wore.

'How nice your room looks!' said Poll, lingering a moment to enjoy the unwonted glow; 'it was good of Mrs. Lightfoot to think of the fire. She is not half such a bad body as she makes out. We had quite a talk this afternoon.'

'And she was nice to you, was she? I am glad of that.'

So Pollkins would have some one to look after her should her day of solitude prove very long and dismal. About five o'clock she would receive the telegram, and how it would electrify her! But Poll loved to be important; it would be something that she knew before the others, and that the task of communicating the news to them was confided to her. 'And of course you can write from Queenstown,' Billy had assured and re-assured his palpitating little bird.

'Well, good-night,' said Poll. 'I'll betake myself to my little dark hole, and think of you here in your splendour. You wouldn't like me to bring along my hair and brush it here?' with a wistful after-thought.

'Bring along your hair! What a regular Georgie speech!'

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Bet laughed merrily. 'No, I think we won't brush hair to-night. But, Poll,' hesitating—'Poll, dear, I have been rather bad to you lately. It isn't that I've meant to be; I hadn't anything to blame you for, and I don't want to blame anybody to-night. I have been seeing things a little—differently to-day. Poll, you will tell them——' She cannot trust herself to proceed, lest the agitation in her tone should be too apparent.

'It's my turn to write to-morrow,' said Poll, not a little flattered; 'I'll tell them anything you like.'

'To-morrow! Don't write to-morrow; there is no need to write to-morrow; I—I haven't got my message ready. Put off till Thursday, Poll, and you shall have a——' She paused; she longed to say something warm, affectionate, inspiring, but it was impossible, and, turning away with a sigh, she muttered a reiteration of the word 'message,' which was all that reached her sister's ear.

Poll thought of it afterwards; understood it afterwards.

She departed, and Bet was left, she would have said, in peace; but peace when she had so much to think of, so much actually to do? For very multiplicity of thoughts and cares, she must needs sit down to breathe and let in the wild salt air to cool her burning brow.

Perhaps the strongest emotion within her bosom was the passionate delight of beholding her lover vindicated and her faith in him justified. How she had writhed beneath her impotence when day by day appearances multiplied against him, and the shadow of mistrust deepened in every face but her own! Too well did she know how her constancy had been interpreted; and it needed all the fervour of his gratitude, all his admiration and laudation, to rehabilitate her in her own esteem, while yet lowered in that of her brother and sisters.

Now they would see; now they would surely be generous enough to abase themselves freely before her, and make the *amende honorable* to her husband. Her husband? She buried in her hands the burning, blushing cheeks. It would have been strange enough, it would have been happiness enough to have had all cleared up between her and William Farrell, and to have been able to overwhelm the unbelievers with her wonderful news just when all hope seemed at an end; but what would they say to ardour that could not endure the pangs of uncertainty and separation, even for the brief period which he now owned might see his mission accomplished? Once her consent had been won, the

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term of banishment had shrunk surprisingly. 'We may be back in a few months, Bet.'

Bet had gaily reminded him of his earlier despair. It had been laid upon the depth, and height, and breadth of his devotion. Months had seemed years when he thought he should have to go alone.

'So that, after all, we may be back again among them all before the spring?' ventured she.

It was quite likely, he said.

That being the case, even Lionel could not blame her for sharing his noble self-banishment, and depriving it of half its terrors.

'It is still dreadfully sad,' he murmured; 'one can't think of it as a pleasure trip—and such a honeymoon for you, my darling! Only one woman in a thousand would have been courageous and self-sacrificing enough to undertake it. I fear your people will blame me.'

'Not when they know all,' said she, confidently.

Bet had a strong vein of romance in her nature, and, unknown to herself, there was now perhaps a secret delight in yielding to persuasions which found an echo within her own breast.

She was about to fly with her lover, as heroines in all ages have flown when Fate was adverse. With him by her side, his presence to support, his smile to cheer, what was she not strong enough to dare?

In the dim grey of early dawn she saw herself stealing forth, a tremulous, quaking, shrinking little figure; but she also saw another form, and that the noblest, the strongest, taking her beneath his protecting care, and every fear vanished.

How different now looked the little bare room with its cheap trumpery, from what it had looked on the night of her arrival! She had hated it then, she loved it now. Perhaps some day she would come back to it, and together they would revisit the scenes of her melancholy wanderings over the barren headlands and along the moaning shore. 'I shall always love the place,' cried she. That same morning she had loathed it.

At five o'clock she was to be ready; a boat left Yarmouth a little after six, by catching which the travellers would be in London some time before the special train for passengers crossing by the *Majestic* started from Euston.

And when, Bet had adventured timidly—when would the—the ceremony take place?

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That, it appeared, could easily be arranged during the period of embarkation.

'It will be all right; you may rely on me,' said he, quickly.

She had also been exhorted to burden herself with but few personal belongings. 'We shall buy the *trousseau* in New York, Bet.'

'Are we stopping in New York?'

'Long enough for that. You shall have the finest jewels and dresses——'

'Oh, I don't mind—that is, I don't mind much; of course it will be nice.' She corrected herself, fearful of disappointing him. 'I am very fond of fine things, only——'

'Well?' said he, curiously.

'Only they seem nothing now,' whispered she, laying her cheek upon his hand.

For a full minute he did not speak.

Then he hurriedly began again; she was too good, far too good for him, but his life should be devoted to making hers happy; he would shield her from every harm; she should never regret that she had given up all for his sake.

'It is such a little give-up,' said she, smiling through her tears.

The prospect of a splendid fresh equipment had, however, its influence upon Bet's surreptitious packing. There was her pretty summer frock, with the old lace at the throat. It had been brought because she had so little else to bring, and there might be some lingering summer yet in the Isle of Wight. Poll would like to have it; it was crushed back into the drawer. A flowery hat—two hats—were likewise restored to their places; her plain little straw would be the thing for the voyage, all indeed that she would require. *He* would choose the next she wore.

She packed carefully, however, all necessaries, again and again discarding what had been deemed such from the little hand-bag which contained her all, reflecting that certain treasures, without which she never went anywhere, would be safe with Poll, safe in the dear little home when she returned to claim them.

When all was done, and her hair brushed and plaited for the night, 'Now for Poll,' cried she, thinking Poll would be easily disposed of; but paper after paper was torn to bits ere the few sentences which were to compose poor Pollkins' mind were finally allowed to stand.

'Please don't mind being alone to-day. I had to go out

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early; but you shall hear about it in the afternoon, though it mayn't be till late; so don't worry, but get on with your sea-weeds.'

'Shall I tell her not to poke into my room? Or—no, I will leave it so that they may poke if they please,' decided Bet. But it was not without a twinge that she arrayed *débris* upon the toilet table, and scattered about other articles, so that what she had taken would not be missed. 'He was so very particular that no one should know till it was done, and I promised that no one should through me. It was such a little thing to ask,' she consoled herself.

By five o'clock she was at the garden gate.

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'Do you know,' said William, as they rattled through the London streets a few hours later, 'that I am afraid I shall have to test your courage a little further yet, my dearest? I would not tell you before, for you had to go through quite enough as it was, but I had letters this morning at my hotel which tell me that we are not off a moment too soon. They are already on the scent. Bet, would you very much mind travelling alone to Liverpool? Let me explain,' he ran on, rapidly. 'I shall be there before you, for I shall be off now, at once, by another train, while you can run down in comfort in the special, which does not start till twelve. If there were any idea that I was likely to be in the special——'

'I see; but could I not go with you by the other train?'

'It would hardly do'—he shook his head; 'that is to say, it would be better, decidedly better, if you could make up your mind for us to travel separately. Of course, I don't wish to press it.'

'I will do it—William.'

'That's my own plucky little girl. You see I can go in a smoker, third-class, and all that sort of thing. You, Bet, must go down in style; here is the fare of your ticket—you must take it, dear; you belong to me now.'

'Not quite yet,' smiled she.

'You will directly. Anyway, you are going to obey orders? That's right. Then here is your passage ticket—I told you I had risked taking it, since if you had refused to go I should simply have torn it up—you had better put it in your purse now. Of course I shall be there awaiting you on the platform, but in case you are asked to show your ticket first, it is as well to have it. Here we are,' glancing out, 'just coming into Euston Station.'

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For a few minutes he kept his head out of the window, peering hither and thither, then drew it in again, apparently satisfied. 'In lots of time, Bet; so I shall just dispose of you here, get a porter to put you into the train, and be off. You won't mind?' averting his eyes from her somewhat wistful gaze.

She felt a little frightened. It would be so strange, so lonely without him. From the moment in which she had discerned, through the dim light of struggling dawn, his figure waiting for her at the cottage gate, all nervous trepidations and wavering self-reliance had been soothed to rest; and it was only now, when told that she must again be thrown back upon herself, that her spirits sank a little.

He saw the shadow on her brow, and made haste to dispel it. She was his own affianced bride, the sweetest, fairest treasure, the noblest heart—he had not said the half when he had to go. It would not do to run the risk of missing his train, and it was just about to start.

'From here?' cried she.

'From Euston, to be sure. I fear I have not too much time. How cold it is!' He hastily tied a muffler over his mouth, turned up his collar, and brought his hat down over his eyes. 'You are sure you understand, Bet? The *Majestic* special; that is all you have to say, and look out for me on the platform——' He was hurried, flurried, all the time casting his eyes hither and thither. 'If I could have managed it any other way——'

'Oh, never mind,' said she, bravely.

'In a few hours, and then we shall never part again!' he whispered. '*Auf wiedersehn*—you know what that means? Give me one smile,' he implored.

The next moment it was 'Now, look sharp; time's up!' in accents of imperious command; and making a sign to the porter who was shouldering his portmanteau, William Farrell dashed in front of the man and was lost to sight in the crowd.

. . . . . .

'I dare say we shall have a bit of a breeze.' A smart, sociable-looking girl, who was Bet's only fellow-traveller in the comfortable compartment of the *Majestic* special, leaned forward to draw her plaid over her knees, tucked it in, and proceeded: 'I don't mind; do you? Is this your first crossing?'

Bet owned it was.

'Mean to be sick?' said the other, with interest. 'Well, now, I'll tell you a splendid remedy. You can get it on

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board. I always do. I've crossed, let me see, a dozen times at least.'

'Have you really? I don't think I should like that.' Bet shuddered a little. 'I don't know much about travelling.'

'But you are going by yourself, I see?'

'Only as far as Liverpool; I am to be met there. Indeed, I wouldn't go alone for worlds.'

'Wouldn't you?' Her companion laughed. 'Now that does seem queer to me. I'd as soon go alone as not—a great deal sooner, unless my companion were to my taste.'

'Well, perhaps,' said Bet, feebly.

It would be as well to start some other subject, she thought. Sociability might degenerate into curiosity, and she was in no mood to parry questions. From the appearance of her companion she argued one of those frank, superficial chatterers who will talk to anybody, given the chance, and was amused by the alert, matter-of-fact air with which she looked about, disposed of her feet upon the cushions, and proceeded to nibble from a chocolate box.

Not to be uncivil, our novice accepted a chocolate; but to munch it with zest and be ready for another when the box was again handed was impossible.

'I say, I believe you are just making yourself ready to be sick as fast as you can,' quoth its owner, good-naturedly. 'Now you take my advice and don't think about it. We are going to cross together, and, as we have got in here together first, we may as well begin by getting to know each other. That is, if you don't object?'

Oh no, Bet did not object. She rather liked the girl, admiring her handsome face and handsome dress, with her general air of well-being and good-humour. Of course a stranger could know nothing to make her suppose advances or any little display of interest unwelcome. Evidently she had no reticence as to her own affairs, and if she could be kept to them would be agreeable company enough; and, besides, she, Bet, might learn a thing or two from Mademoiselle's or Madam's experience. A new idea. Married or single? Which was she?

'Is that what you want to see?' The young lady had taken off her gloves, and Bet's eyes had been caught wandering to the left hand. 'There it is,' proceeded the speaker, laughingly exhibiting a wedding-ring. 'So you see I can travel about all over the world if I have a mind. Perhaps you think I'm an

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American?' after a pause, during which Bet had been feeling surreptitiously her little bare third finger, and in her mind's eye beholding the magic circlet placed upon it. Already she had had a private—a very private— rehearsal of the all-important moment. He had produced the ring at the same time that he confessed to the passage ticket. All had been risked. However faint had been the ray of hope within his bosom, 'it was worth,' he cried, 'throwing his all after.' The phrase was enough. Who would have been so cruel as to analyse it?

The smile upon her face deceived Bet's loquacious fellow-traveller. Secure of an auditor, apparently interested and sympathetic, she was now in full tide. 'So you see you can't call me an American, even if I have lived most of my life on the other side. That part of your life doesn't count. I've been over here off and on for a dozen years, and I suppose I know London as well as most people. Not that it has ever done much for me, and I wouldn't care if I never saw its face again,' with a sudden snap of asperity.

'I don't live in London,' said Bet, gently.

'In the country, I suppose? Gracious! I'd rather live in a London slum than that. I can't abide the country. But, after all, America's the place,' continued the fair cosmopolitan, smoothing her muff. 'I've lived about a good deal, and there's no place suits my complaint like it. You wait and see.' No argument was forthcoming. 'You can get along there first-rate. Nobody wants to know too much—not that *I* need mind,' ostentatiously flourishing her left hand. 'A married woman is a married woman anywhere. I suppose you aren't married?' suddenly.

'I am not,' said Bet in a quiet, reserved tone.

The other shook out her lace boa and blew some crumbs from it, for they had lunched together.

'You don't look it; you are too——' She paused, and looked over from top to toe the little figure on the seat opposite, then broke into a laugh. 'I was going to say something rude. I wonder if you'd mind? Of course you are awfully pretty, and all that——'

'Oh, please don't!' Bet flushed to her brow. The impertinence positive and unmistakable revolted her, and that it was not intended for such hardly improved matters.

'What! Do you mind my saying that? Well, I won't say the other, then.' Her companion nodded familiarly. 'Whoever

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heard of anyone's minding being called pretty? I suppose you are one of those girls who live in cotton wool, with papa and mamma and the old nurse, family prayers, and a Sunday school at the back door. What, you aren't? Then I bet you've been told you're pretty, and it was all a try-on.'

'I never said I had not been told so.' Suddenly there was a flash of the old Bet. 'But on the part of a mere stranger—— However, I am sure you meant nothing.'

'Of course I meant nothing,' shortly. The two journeyed on in silence.

It was a raw, chill October day, and the moaning wind every now and then rose to a blast that shook the windows of the train. Between showers, however—for rain accompanied the wind—clear views of the flying landscape were obtainable, and one of these afforded a glimpse of an imposing country seat, finely situated in the midst of wooded uplands. It caught the eye of both our fellow-travellers at the same moment, and, as each was secretly feeling a little ashamed and uncomfortable, the opportunity for patching up a peace was a good one.

'That's a nice place,' observed Madam, easily.

'A beautiful place.'

Bet could not say 'a beautiful place' without being reminded of—— But not a word of Ughtred or of Henham in such company.

'Were you ever inside a place of that kind?' Suddenly the girl turned upon her. 'I never was, and I don't mind owning it. All I know of swells and their houses I get at the theatres.'

'At the theatres?'

A new light broke upon Bet. The flippant ease, the friendliness, the commonness—all were explained. She experienced a sensation of immediate relief united to a trifle of curiosity.

An actress? How interesting! She had never before spoken to an actress, and actresses, as everyone knew, were not to be judged by the usual standard. In a few minutes the two were prattling freely.

'Oh yes, I know houses like that,' said Bet, now eager to atone for what was probably incomprehensible in her former demeanour; 'my brother and sister are stopping at one now.'

'That was why they didn't come to see you off?'

'They did not know I was coming. I am to wire to them, and write. They will be quite surprised.' The train was speeding on, and she had regained her cheerfulness. 'You are

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expecting to be seen off at Liverpool?' For, thought she, 'It is only fair to show some interest in return."

'Rather not,' replied the young lady briskly; 'you and I seem to be in the same boat—even before we go on board the *Majestic*,' with a laughing afterthought. 'We are both on our own hook, we had better look after each other. But don't you be afraid. I have sized you pretty well by this time'—Bet started; 'and, as you have been civil to me, I'll be civil to you. You weren't quite sure of me at the first, I could see that; but now that you know I'm on the boards it's all right? Is that it? Don't you make a mistake, though. I never said I was doing anything now. I'm not, and I don't know if I ever shall again. It depends; still, if it makes you like me any the better, I don't mind telling you that there isn't a theatre in London where I'm not known and couldn't get any seat I chose. Is it all right for me to tell you you are pretty now?'

After a while the speaker resumed: 'I've taken rather a fancy to you, may I say that too? And I don't quite understand your being allowed to run about by yourself——'

'But I said I was to be met'—said Bet, panting, tremulous.

'Of course, to be met. Now by whom, I wonder?' She addressed the words to the outer air meditatively. 'Sometimes a girl like you had better not be met. I had better not have been met—once.' There was no evading the steady, searching eyes. 'That's long ago.' A few deep breaths. 'And he married me. As sure as God is above us he married me, though he would be glad to deny it now. I made him do it, my dear; but think what that means, to make a man go through with it whether he wishes or not. To know if he could have had you on any other terms, he would. That's my story. If you——?' It seemed to Bet as though it were another creature talking, a haggard, worn-out creature, with lines about her painted mouth and a deep undertone of misery in her shrill, dauntless accents.

Fascinated, she gazed at and shrank from her. By what strange instinct had this stranger divined enough to bid her act the sybil, warning others from the way her own feet had trod?

'You said you—you——' stammered she, regarding afresh the charmed circlet on her companion's finger.

'Oh, I am; and times are not so bad with me but that they might be worse. I still care a little for that good-for-nothing scoundrel, and can tether him to my side when I choose. Not

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only by this,' glancing complacently at the wedding-ring; 'but because I know too much, he has told me too much, he dares not break with me in this country; that is partly why he is flying to another—not altogether, but partly. You are going to meet some one at Liverpool? So am I. I am not expected as you are, but I have this 'Open Sesame'—and here she touched the ring—'while you——?'

'Oh, hush!' said Bet, hoarsely. It was terrible to her to speak, and yet to be the subject of those suspicious glances!

'Does that make it right?' she murmured; 'because—because—I'll tell you, as you seem kind, and in earnest, and I don't want you to think anything bad of me——'

'Not of *you*,' said the other, under her breath.

'I don't know how you came to notice anything, I had dressed myself so quietly'—she caught a glance at her poor little dowdy clothes; it was a remark on these which had been on the tip of the flashy woman's tongue before—'and I did not say anything strange, did I?' struggling to recollect. 'But there is, it is true, there is a friend——'

'Where?'

'He is to be on the platform. There will be time, he says, before we start. The—Registrar's Office is close by.'

There was a long silence. The train was whistling, shrieking, flying along. Outlying portions of the great seaport were visible on every side.

'You see,' said Bet at last, struggling with a vague sense of danger and of terror, 'that all will be quite, quite right directly I have met my friend. He came with me as far as London; we had another journey together first—but there we had to separate because, oh! I can't tell you why'—her lover's strict injunctions to secrecy reverting to her mind—'but it had nothing to do with ourselves, nothing. He is all that is good and noble and——' A sob.

'I doubt it.' The hard-faced woman set her teeth and ground them unknown to Bet. 'Methinks I scent a villain,' muttered she, reverting to some melodrama; 'and yet my hands are so full with my own affairs that how to mix myself up in another ——? She calls him "good and noble," the hackneyed phrase; she must have the innocence of a babe to use it. If I could but see him, one look would tell me more than all this child's outpourings.'

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'You shall see him,' said Bet, softly, at the moment. It seemed to her that no one could look upon her lover's face and doubt his faith.

Faster and faster they swing along, now amidst the dingy outskirts of the city, now plunging into its very heart, now—'Yes, here we are!' says Bet's companion, in would-be lively accents. 'So, cheer up, my dear, and we shall soon see—stay, though.' Suddenly she snatched and gripped between her own the little hand which hung at Bet's side. 'If anything's wrong, *I'm here*. Look at me, understand me; I'm not a girl like you; I'm an old, old woman, and *I'm here*.'

'Yes, yes, thank you,' said Bet, shrinking a little away.

And though a minute before she had been willing, nay, anxious to subject William Farrell to the keen scrutiny of those black, brilliant eyes, she felt on a sudden that she had been too hasty. William might not like her having made friends with a stranger. She would slip away and be alone when they met, and there would apparently be no difficulty in so doing, since the wharf-side station was full of people awaiting the arrival of the *Majestic* passengers.

Bet was not confused by this. Although inexperienced in many ways, her random youth had given her a certain amount of independence, and she stepped on to the platform with renewed buoyancy, the thought that she was once more to be with *him* overcoming every other.

'Oh, William!'

'Yes, it's all right,' said he, cheerfully. 'Here we are, and I've got it in my pocket,' patting the place. 'In a few minutes we shall be made one for all time, my little girl. You got on all right? Had a pleasant journey down? No bother?'

'Only I was so glad to see you.'

'It was a nuisance having to part company, but it served its purpose. I have been at the place, and the fellow is waiting. I have a cab here too.'

'You thought of everything,' moving proudly by his side.

'It would not have done to forget,' said he. 'My baggage is on board, and, as you have nothing but this bag'—it was in his hand—'we'll be there and back in twenty minutes. Hallo!' to one of the boat's crew, 'you won't be off under an hour, I suppose.'

'Hardly an hour, sir. An easy half-hour, or, maybe, three-quarters.'

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'Enough for us.' He turned to her again. 'This way, dear——'

'No, sir, not *that* way.' A voice behind made the pair turn their heads. Were they being addressed?

It was hardly likely, yet an almost imperceptible start shot through the veins of each. The voice was recognised by both.

'Not that way, William Farrell; your way, dear Will, and mine, lies there,' and Bet's fellow-traveller pointed with her finger at the noble liner moored to the dock. A mocking smile wreathed her lips; a cold gleam shone in her eyes.

'So this is your little game, is it, Will? Your last little game, I should say; you have played me many a scurvy trick before, but to run off to America leaving me behind—at least you should have made sure that I did not wish to go, don't you think? It was a mistake to leave me enough money for the passage, anyway. You have made one or two mistakes, dear boy, clever as you are. Not that it signified much my travelling down with your intended wife——' She looked at Bet. 'Good God! you villain!' she cried out, and caught the sinking girl in her arms.

'Poor thing! Can't stand the farewell scene!' whispered some sympathetic bystanders among themselves. 'Seeing people off is always a mistake.'

'William Farrell, you deserve to be damned for this,' proceeded the first speaker. Cool sarcasm had now given place to tones of smothered passion. 'I was sure I had an instinct that something was wrong, but I little thought it was *you*. That you should dare! A girl of this sort! And the farce of a marriage ceremony, when you knew I could be down upon you at any moment—Oho!' Suddenly a new intelligence appeared to strike her. 'That's it, is it? There's more behind, is there? You're giving the old country the slip for ever, so you may as well go the whole hog?' She slipped close up to him and hissed in his ear, 'What about the bank, William?'

With a fresh spasm upon his livid face, with eyes darting fury and despair, he sprang upon her to silence her.

'Keep your distance,' said she, coolly stepping back. 'The bank is nothing to me; I have guessed about *that* for some time past. But I mean to have my share of the loot——'

'Mad woman!' He was writhing in terror so abject that her passion died away, and she resumed her taunting tone. 'It was a shame to try and do your old partner out of her portion of the glorious haul. Glorious it must be, or the game wouldn't have

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been worth the candle. For you are giving up a good deal, William, and it must have been a mighty deep hole you had got yourself into——'

'Hold your tongue, you——'

'Ha—ha! He's fairly white over it. My dear'—to Bet—'look at your fine gentleman now. He's not pretty, is he? You poor child,' her tone softening, 'if ever I am glad of anything I have done in this world, I am glad I have saved you. You'll bless me for it some day, and if'—in her ear—'if ever you think of a poor wicked woman in your prayers——' She held the shuddering form fast. There was a breathless pause.

Suddenly William Farrell started forward. 'Bet——'

'Hands off! You shan't touch her, you shan't speak to her. If you do——' Her menacing tone and threatening aspect cowed him. He drew back.

'I have but to say the word, and you know what would follow, sir. One little word. Thief—swindler—would-be adulterer, shall I—shall I?'

'You would not, you could not, Geraldine.' He caught her by the wrist. She shook him off angrily.

'Take care. Don't drive me too far.'

'It would be your own ruin as well as mine.'

'That might be, and yet,' she looked at him pitilessly, 'there are times when that seems of no consequence. I could treat you as you have treated me.'

'Hush, for Heaven's sake!'

'For Heaven's sake? No. For your sake and my own. Perhaps. Yes, I calculate I'll keep quiet, William, unless'—again a hard, relentless look—'unless you provoke me to forget. If you don't want to do that, you'll keep a civil tongue in your head. You're afraid of me, sir, and very well you may be; I could take such a revenge on you——' She paused, her eyes dilating, her nostrils expanding. 'It would almost be worth it,' she muttered.

'Now, then, ladies and gentleman, the passengers are going aboard, now, if you please.' A civil official passed by at the moment. 'All passengers on board, please——' His retreating voice died away in the distance.

'Well now, William, you had better make up your mind.' She had regained command of herself and was regarding him as a cat does a mouse. 'If you choose to be under orders, and come along quietly, you can. The play can proceed,' reverting to her actress days. 'But, mind, it depends on yourself. Where you

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go, I go. I have stood this sort of things long enough, and from to-day I am Mrs. William Farrell——'

'Damnation! Not that name,' he started, fiercely. 'If you know so much, you might know——'

'To be sure. Give me the password, then, whatever it is, and let us be going.'

'Gray,' said he, mechanically.

'Lead on, Mr. Gray.'

He looked as if he could have struck her, torn her—but durst not defy her. The sweat stood on his brow. He hesitated.

'Obey me,' she said, setting her teeth.

He moved a pace and turned. No one could have called the man a coward, foiled and trapped at every point; it needed all his desperate sense of what a moment's lapse from self-control might bring to force down his will.

'You think you have checkmated me,' he began.

'There's not much thinking in the case. If ever a man was checkmated, if ever a hypocrite was unmasked—but it's a pity there's such a poor audience'—looking half ironically, half sadly, downwards—'only this one miserable little girl. She's hardly worth the scene. Good-bye, my dear,' gently withdrawing her supporting arm from the motionless, benumbed figure; 'don't fret more than you can help, and get back to your friends as fast as you can. Now, Mr. Gray; before me, if you please.'

Like a criminal he slunk before her.

The platform was almost empty, and a young idler who had returned from seeing his friends off, and who perceived that something a little out of the common was going on, drifted nearer as the group broke up.

'It's a deuce of a shame to leave the girl in that state,' thought he. 'She ought to have some one with her. It wasn't a very tender leave-taking neither,' for he had seen that no kisses nor embraces passed. 'Something queer somewhere;' and he glanced curiously and almost resentfully after the retreating couple.

They were visible for more than a minute, the man slouching along with his head down, evidently under the domination of the erect woman behind, whose purple hat and feathers, discernible long after the wearer's form was lost in the crowd, steadily held its way. Neither looked back.

'Cool customers.' The young man shrugged his shoulders.

Then whistling softly under his breath, he took a turn nearer

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the hapless derelict left behind, wondering kind-heartedly that nobody should be there to look after her, and wishing that she would go; go away and go home, or at any rate go out of sight, if obliged to wait for the train returning south.

'Can't some of these fools tell her?' muttered he, looking at the groups of porters idly chatting now that their labours were over.

To avoid a sight which made him uncomfortable, the stranger strolled back to the landing-stage, and stood there. The *Majestic* was loosing her ropes, and beginning to swing steadily round, preparatory to feeling her way out of dock. Demonstrations of farewell were taking place betwixt those on board and those on shore.

Ha! There was the purple hat again, and the fellow with her! They were on the upper deck, side by side. Then the man moved quickly away, but the woman followed him. He moved again, and again she was by his side. Our bystander laughed to himself, laughed and backed the woman. 'A white-livered chap, and she has got her claws well into him. Whatever is up, I back the woman,' summed up he, decisively.

A minute later, William Farrell's face suddenly appeared on the lower deck. 'Hallo? Dodged her at last, have you? And if the gangway hadn't been up, you'd have been across it, but it's too late now, sir.' The young man apostrophised the unconscious figure before him with solemn irony. 'Too late, sir. She's got you, and she'll keep you.' With the words, the form of the pursuer emerged to view, and he broke off to see what would happen next.

Like a hawk she pounced upon her prey. It was the last sight anyone in England ever had of either.

'Have you anything to do with that young lady on the platform, sir?' The spectator of the above little drama was turning away when he was respectfully accosted by one of the station officials. 'That young lady left behind, sir? I think perhaps you'd better go to her if she belongs to you.'

'Eh? But she doesn't. Is anything the matter?'

'Seems dazed like. Been saying "Good-bye" or something. There's many of 'em takes it hard, but seeing her all alone——'

At the same moment a wild cry rang with startling suddenness upon their ears. With a look at each other they hurried back, but no Bet was to be seen.

'She was here a minute ago,' said one of a set of men who

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had hastened out from various quarters at the sound; 'I noticed her. So did Bill here. We thought she had ought to have some one with her——'

'But where is she now?'

They looked up and down. No one could answer. She was gone.

CHAPTER XXVI.

'DON'T YOU SEE WHAT SHE MEANS?'

A NIGHT of wind had cleared the sky, and next morning broke bright and blue all over the land.

Nowhere is a beautiful autumn morning more beautiful than in the precincts of a fine English country house, or so at least thought a certain young man who gazed from his open window over 'sunny slope and beechen swell,' whose ear drank in the tinkling sheep-bell, the woodpigeon's note—who awoke moreover from a night's sound, refreshing sleep to the prospect of a happy day.

On the previous evening Lionel had given Leonora a rose. He knew nothing of new and approved methods of love-making, but this he did know—that the gift nestled in the bosom of his mistress, and that she blushed when she caught his eyes upon it. With all his modesty he felt himself so near the goal that one step forward was all that was required. To-day he would take that step.

And it almost seemed as if others knew he would; a consciousness was in the air. Every member of the little party, now reduced to its original numbers, looked gay, kind, joyous, expectant; a gentle radiance diffused itself over Leonora's countenance—she trod on air; Lady Blanche forbore to make plans. 'We shall see how the day turns out.' Her nephew's request for commissions from the ladies to be executed by him at the neighbouring town whither he proposed riding—'And I thought of going just as soon as ever I could go, aunt Blanche'—was received graciously by all.

He was a dear boy to think of it. So clever, too. They wanted quite a number of things. No one asked if Lionel would care to ride that morning.

The girls strolled along the terrace. 'Don't go very far, my

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dears,' said Lady Blanche; 'we may want to consult by-and-by. We must not waste this charming day.'

They promised to seek her out presently.

Lionel was in the hall as her ladyship passed through on her way to the morning-room, and the rustle of her dress died softly away along the passage. His heart beat a little, because it is not in the nature of hearts to help beating at such moments; but though he affected to be examining some trophies of the chase, and lingered in front of a mighty bear's skin, measuring it with his eye, he did not mean to lose his opportunity.

Lady Blanche was kindness itself; he could not think of her but with the sincerest, deepest gratitude—indeed, she came next to Leonora and his sisters in his affections; an interview with her could not be very formidable.

'And she must know,' thought he.

Still, a lump rose in his throat as, having given the lady five minutes' start by the clock, he gathered up his courage and prepared to follow. He had already advanced a few steps when a side door opened.

But it was only a footman with a telegram on a salver, and Lady Blanche would soon dispose of the telegram; he had been afraid for a moment that Leonora and Georgie were returning.

The telegram was for him.

'I daresay they want me back at the office?' he cogitated, unfastening the envelope. 'It's hardly fair, but I suppose I should have to go.' Aloud: 'No answer; I'll attend to it.'

Attend to it. Yes, but he had other things to attend to first, and this tiresome bit of pink paper, come at such an inopportune moment, should be crushed into his pocket.

. . . . . .

'Why does not that boy come?' murmured Lady Blanche, smiling sweetly to herself.

She half rose, thinking she would go to him upon some trivial pretext, and bring him back with her, a willing captive. But she had really done so very much, and after all dear Leonora's dignity had to be thought of.

'He will certainly come;' she nodded to herself, and resumed her seat.

The house was quiet; she could have heard his slightest tap at the door; it made her nervous watching for it. Ten minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour passed; she could stand no more. 'I *must* go and see what he is about,' she said aloud, and went.

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'Lionel!' softly at his elbow. He was there, where he had been last seen; he had not foolishly wandered away after the girls, or ensconced himself in the smoking-room. She half repented of her impatience; still, time was passing and she could settle to nothing with this hanging over her. 'Lionel?'

'Yes. Oh, I beg your pardon, Lady Blanche.' He turned hurriedly, thrusting something in his hand out of sight.

'My dear Lionel, I was only going to propose—but what is the matter?' quickly. 'Has anything happened? Have you hurt yourself? Your hand?'—for he was still concealing it behind his back. 'Do tell me at once; I have everything a surgeon could have.'

'Thank you.'

For a few dizzy moments he could think of nothing else to say; then steeled himself. 'A telegram was brought to me just now which requires—immediate attention. If you please, Lady Blanche—if you would be so very good—if I might venture to ask you not to—not to inquire——'

'But, my dear Lionel, you look quite ill. Pray come into the dining-room and let me give you——'

He shook his head.

'What can I do for you?' cried she, tenderly. ('How very unfortunate!' to herself.)

'I must go at once,' said Lionel, with thick, choking utterance. 'My sisters are in trouble and have sent for me. I must go,' he repeated, as if someone were trying to prevent him.

'Certainly you must go.' Lady Blanche advanced to the bell-rope.

'Send word to the stables to have a dog-cart brought round as soon as it can be got ready, Balderston. A quick horse, to go to the station.'

'You see, I speed the parting guest'—she turned as the door shut—'but that guest will return, I hope, directly the difficulty is over. Things often seem at first sight so much blacker than they are, my dear Lionel. I am so very sorry, but telegrams are sometimes worded so unfortunately that they give the very worst impression——'

'Yes, yes; yes, they do.' He caught at this.

'And your sisters are such excitable, dear things, and lean so upon you.'

'I know; I hope it is so. God grant it is so. But I must

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make sure. And then there is Georgie,' putting his hand to his forehead.

'That need not trouble you; Georgie remains here, where, I hope, in a few days her brother will rejoin her,' smiling encouragement. 'And a thought strikes me: bring the others too; why not? It is a good opportunity, and we shall rejoice to have them. Then little Georgie's heart need not be troubled with this worry.'

'Oh, Lady Blanche, if I could keep it from her!'

'Certainly keep it from her; she is too young to know everything. When things go wrong it is often best to keep quiet till they right themselves. If they do not right themselves, it is time enough then to tell.'

'You are so good! Such a kind, kind comforter!'

'Will you run up and put your things together, then? I daresay you would prefer doing this yourself, as James would probably muddle, not knowing what to take and what to leave. And as you are only running off for a day or two——'

He clasped her hand in silent gratitude.

And the bright, inspiring tones diffused a measure of hope within his breast. At first the shock had been too awful. A horrible gulf seemed to have opened at his feet, which before had been standing on a carpet bedecked with flowers. He had been overwhelmed, stupefied; but no sooner was he alone than he conned afresh the telegram, in order to try whether it might bear, as Lady Blanche said, an interpretation he had not put upon it.

The words were simple and few: 'Bet is lost. Do come quickly. Poll.' Let us go back to the sender, and see under what conditions they were despatched.

Since coming to Freshwater it had been something of a habit with Bet to rise early and go out before breakfast, so that no surprise was created by her doing so on the present occasion. She had probably gone seaweed hunting, and her lengthened absence meant maintained interest in the new art which had aroused it the night before. So thought Poll; not in so many words, but with an easy mind, which permitted her to eat her breakfast in peace, while looking for the laggard's reappearance at any moment.

She was in the act of setting down the coffee-pot to be kept hot before the fire when Mary stepped in with a slip of paper which she had found pinned to the toilet cover in the bedroom overhead, and upon which she cast the loving eye of curiosity as it was taken from her hand.

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'Oh! You can take away, Mary,' said Poll.

'Yes, miss,' said Mary.

So Bet had betaken herself off for the day. Perhaps to prospect in other quarters with a view to a move? There would be no harm in that, though it was odd of Bet to have said nothing. Still, Bet often was odd.

The morning passed off well enough, though it was rather a long morning. Even if Bet were not always the best of companions, she was there, she was about, she was to be got at if wanted. It was dull without her.

In the afternoon it rained, and the belated one was duller still. By four o'clock she was heartily sick of her own company and her solitary occupation. Alack, poor Poll! She could never look at a seaweed afterwards, and hunted up Mrs. Lightfoot in the kitchen.

But Mrs. Lightfoot was busy, and in no mood for conversation—to do her justice, she had no idea of her services in that respect being in any way of special value—and somewhat dismally the young lady retired. She was now idle and doleful, but still not alarmed.

Would she have tea, or wait for Miss Bet? Mary was primitive, and said 'Miss Bet.'

It was agreed that the tea might be laid, and would be a welcome sight when the wanderer returned.

'It's only bringing up another pot, miss,' quoth the obliging handmaiden when at the close of an hour Mrs. Lightfoot could not abear the thought of that poor creature all alone waiting longer, and took upon herself to despatch pot number one.

'Thank you,' said Poll, with a sigh.

But when she had eaten and drunk, there was again nothing to do and no one to speak to.

The shades of evening began to fall, her eyes closed drowsily, there was a soft humming in her ear, and her head sank forward on her breast.

It was dark—pitch dark—when she awoke; and now at last with returning consciousness came the first vague stirrings of alarm. Where *could* Bet be? And what *could* she be doing?

'Yes, Mrs. Lightfoot, she said she would be back in the afternoon,' for it was the landlady's own portentous figure which filled the doorway—'indeed she said so,' whimpered poor Poll, with a suspicion of newly started tears in her voice; 'you can read for

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yourself,' holding out the slip of paper pencilled in Bet's handwriting.

'Lor', miss!' A quick eye shot a penetrating glance. 'Well, it ain't for me to say—ahem!'

'Oh, do, do say!' breathlessly.

'*She* ain't comin' back. She's gone. Gone home, I daresay. Hasn't she been mopish ever since she comed—not likin' the place, I take it? Well, she's off, and left you to settle up.'

'Do you think so?' quoth simple Poll.

She was vexed, and yet reassured. It was not quite nice of Bet, but then poor Bet had been tried and fretted of late. Now that she read over the slip of paper afresh it certainly did seem as if the landlady might be right. Bet had gone home, acting on the impulse of the moment, and on the same impulse promised more than she could perform. No word would be received from her before the morning. 'I shall be sure to hear then,' she said.

'Aye, to be sure, miss.'

There was the weary evening to get through, but Mary's company and further tuition in seaweed lore was not accepted; and the latter came back from an exploring expedition to report that the young lady was sitting despondent-like over the fire.

And there she sat till bedtime.

But when she went upstairs and, moved by a sudden fancy, turned first into her sister's room, a deeper shade fell upon her face. Why should Bet have left all her things behind? Why scattered about like this? And what need for going home in haste that would not admit of——hark! what is that? Voices below. She rushed to the little landing——

'Bet, is that you? Bet, oh Bet, is that you?'

But it was not Bet.

. . . . . .

'Well, now, haven't you had no letter? Well, now, of course there ain't nothin' the matter, but still——'

'Yes, Mrs. Lightfoot, I am going now. I was on my way to the post-office; I shall telegraph to my brother. I am rather—rather uneasy. She may have been taken ill.' Then all at once, 'Oh, I am so miserable—I am so miserable,' for poor Poll had been awake half the night and crying; 'I am so very, very miserable,' sobbed she.

'You're not thinkin'—she can't have gone too near the cliffs, can she?' hinted the landlady, fingering her apron.

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'Oh, oh, oh!' sobbed Poll. It was what she had been thinking herself.

She was exhorted not to 'take on,' not to 'meet trouble half-way,' with divers other salutary and inspiring counsels; but in the end she flew up to the village post office, feeling worse than before.

And Lionel could not be with her for many hours yet! He was thoughtful, and she received word from him before noon that he was on his way; but, oh, the woeful time she had of it waiting and waiting, with every now and again a thrill of hope, a fancied sound only to end in disappointment—always disappointment—with a deadlier chill than before at her heart!

When Lionel arrived one glance was sufficient for him. 'When was it? How was it? Have you no clue to where they went?' he cried, sharply. 'We must not lose a moment——'

'They?' echoed she, bewildered.

'Of course, *they*. Are you a child, Poll? Poor girl, this is dreadful for you,' his voice softened somewhat, 'but we can't waste time to think of that. Tell me as quickly and as clearly as you can, all, everything that has happened, for till I know I can't act. When was she missed? Last night?'

'Yesterday morning.'

'Yesterday morning! Good God! And you never sent word till to-day—a whole day and night?'

'But, dear Lionel, she left this,' producing the well-worn, oft-read little scrap; 'so how could we——?' He was lost in reading and heard no more. When he had finished he turned over the paper, but there was nothing on the other side; he re-read slowly what there was.

'This was to keep you quiet,' he said bitterly.

'But, Lionel—oh, Lionel, that is what Mrs. Lightfoot says. She says such horrid things about Bet being out of sorts and not like herself—as if she knew what Bet's "self" was—and then, and then she goes on about the—the cliffs, and people falling over——'

'Rubbish. The woman is befooling you. She is in his pay.'

'His? Oh, Lionel, what *do* you mean? It is Bet who——'

'Bet and—another. This is no time for innocence,' said he, sternly; for it will have been already perceived that intuition had taught him the truth, and, struggle as he might to adopt Lady Blanche's hopes and theories, the truth it remained with him.

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'That devil has got her,' he muttered. 'Blinded us, scattered us, and—got her.'

'Do you mean—Billy?' whispered Poll, scared and yet incredulous. 'Oh no, Lionel; no, indeed, Lionel. We have never seen nor heard anything of Billy since we came to this place, and she was beginning to forget about him. I am sure she was; the very last evening we were together she was quite her old self, exactly her old self as she always was after a storm, so nice and gentle and sorry. She said she had been—bad—to me,' tears again rising at the remembrance, 'and she was going to send a message to you and Georgie——'

'Was that the last evening, the very last?'

'Yes, I never got the message. When we went to bed she took a sash she had out of her drawer and gave it me—for a "make-up," she said. We always do that for make-ups. Oh, Lionel, how could you think Bet could ever do anything wicked? She is so much, so much the best of us. And that dreadful Billy——'

'He set her against us; I am convinced of that. It may have been only maliciousness, to pay us out for seeing through him. We let ourselves in for it; we ought not to have shown our hand so openly—but that's no matter now. If I could think that he is not at the bottom of this——'

'But, Lionel, she is still lost,' for his tone was insensibly less distracted.

'Of course. Poor thing, poor thing; but we can organise a search party. And cheer up, Poll; we may find that—all *may* be explained yet and no harm done. She may have been taken ill at some out-of-the-way place. You know, she has not been well lately, and——'

'If only Mrs. Lightfoot would not go on about the cliffs.'

'Damn the croaking woman. Does she suppose that people go out the first thing in the morning to fall over cliffs? Go out on purpose——?'

'Don't you see—don't you see what she means?

He looked petrified; he had not thought of that.

'She calls it "falling,"' proceeded poor Poll, in a sobbing whisper; 'but all the time she talks about people who went along the cliffs on purpose to "fall." Oh, Lionel, will you tell her that it couldn't be—it couldn't be *that?*'

His face stiffened as he walked up to the house. Examination and cross-examination of its inmates elicited but little. The

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front door had not been unlocked on the previous morning when Mary went down at seven o'clock, but Mary testified that Miss Bet could have gone out by the parlour window if she had had a mind, for she could not say whether it was open or not when she went in to do the room. The young ladies usually went in and out that way, so she gave no thought to it. No step had been heard in the house, and no one had seen Miss Bet go.

'Her bedroom was as it always was of a morning,' blubbered Mary, anxious to be kept going, for once relegated to her pristine obscurity she would hear no more, 'and her bed had been slept in, sir; that I could say for positive. She had on her best pair of boots; the others has holes in them.'

Mary exhausted, her mistress took up the theme. She was sure she had said from the first that miss looked out of sorts. The very night she arrived she wouldn't eat nothing, though there was nice fresh fish.

'Yes, yes,' said Lionel, authoritatively. 'Never mind about that; my sister had not been very well, we know, before she came; but she was better and brighter, it seems, of late; getting quite round again——'

'Dear yes, sir; they was that merry over their seaweeds the last evening——'

'And we went to bed together at ten o'clock,' testified Poll. 'She had a fire in her room——'

'Yes, sir, I had it lit myself—thinking she'd be wet. There was a thick sea-fog outside;' and the dame babbled on.

He little knew how near he was to a clue at the moment. Had he learned that Bet had been out alone for some hours, that she had left the house more than usually dejected and depressed, and returned to it singing and smiling, he might have thought, 'Round this interval the axle turns,' and asked himself, 'What then took place?'

He did muse a moment. 'Was she often out alone?'

'Oh yes,' said Poll, 'she used to go first, and I followed after the post came in. We sometimes got your letters by the afternoon post.'

'Where did she walk?'

'On the downs, or along the shore. She always told me where she would be. Once she went too far—that was when we first came—but she promised not to do it again, and she never did.'

His eye rested on the speaker; he would not say aloud, 'Was she always alone?' but Poll understood.

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'Bet always liked solitary walks, Lionel; at least, lately. And she never had anything to do, so it was wearisome for her in the house.'

'The fine sea air was good for her,' chimed in the landlady.

'And you always found her, or were with her?' proceeded Lionel; thinking, 'On the last day, too?'

'It was the only day I did not go out. Because it was rainy and I stayed in to draw. Bet asked me to go with her,' said Poll, meaningly.

The two understood each other.

'Well, I must go out and set about inquiries elsewhere.' Lionel aroused himself from fruitless conjecture. 'She can't have gone home, I suppose?' suddenly.

'That's what I said!' but Poll stayed the speaker's joyful note. 'I did think of that,' she said, sadly, and drew from her pocket an envelope. 'Lionel, I could not wait till you came, so I wired to Simmins and pre-payed the reply. It came just before you did.' She laid it before him. He read, 'No one is arrived.—George Simmins.'

'What had you written?' Lionel turned to Poll.

'Just this. "Has Miss Bet arrived?" I thought if she had, she would forgive me; if not, it would only seem as if she were coming. There was no harm, was there?'

'No, you were right to do it; but this,' laying down the reply, 'cuts off our last hope. Now, I'll go.'

'Where, Lionel?'

But he hurried past.

'He have gone to the police station, miss,' propounded Job's comforter; and Poll rushed out from her presence.

. . . . . .

'DEAR LADY BLANCHE,—I am afraid it can no longer be kept from poor Georgie that some terrible accident or misfortune has befallen Bet. She went out by herself on Wednesday morning—the day before I was summoned—and has not been seen or heard of since.

'We are making a search for her everywhere, but so far unsuccessfully; and I hardly know how to write it, but the worst is feared. These cliffs are dangerous at certain points, and she was fond of walking by their edge—however, this is only conjecture. We cannot be *sure* of anything. Of course, any better news would be sent you instantly. We have your sympathy, I know, in this awful anxiety, and you will do what you can for poor Georgie.—Yours affectionately, LIONEL COLVIN.'

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Should he say anything about the pencilled scrap on the toilet table? He thought not. He tried to think it was of no consequence, and was enigmatical, misleading. Whatever happened, his sister's fair fame must, if possible, be kept untarnished; and in his heart he felt that the promise of an explanation was hardly compatible with the theory which must be promulgated at all hazards should—should anything be found beneath the cliffs. 'They shall not say she did it,' he groaned within himself.

Curiously enough, he received unsought information which dispelled suspicions that still at times recurred of William Farrell.

A friend had chanced to travel as far as Willesden Junction with the latter on the ill-fated day, and had been charged with a message about a horse. Farrell was going down to the Midlands after a horse for himself, and something had been said of Lionel's wanting one. 'My brother has the very animal for you,' wrote the young man, 'and as Farrell told me I might use his name as my authority for your being on the look-out I just let you know.'

Lionel wrote back thanking him, but he did not buy the horse.

'All the same, it was decent of Billy Farrell to let me know,' observed the artless youth, foiled of his deal. He did not know that Billy Farrell had entered the compartment on purpose, and pleased himself much by the manœuvre.

'It all helps,' thought he. The Midlands and a slow train would not spell Liverpool and a White Star liner on the face of it; while he had so arranged matters at the bank that all would go smoothly on for at least four or five days, by which time, and when the hue and cry had begun, he would be nearing the other shore.

'And then they'll have to summon the partners, and only poor scapegoat Charles is within hail. He'll come up quickly enough —but Tom must take a day or two, and Stephen is at Castle Strome deer-stalking. When they are assembled what can they do? For my part I don't think I see them doing anything—but they might. Stephen has a temper, and fat Tom will pull a monstrous long face. I'm as well out of reach. The bank's done for; the old country's done for so far as I am concerned. And "Mr. Gray" must make a fresh start elsewhere. Pretty young Mrs. Gray will be a great addition to Western society——' But why follow such ruminating further?

Lionel now felt bound in honour to acquit Billy. His heartless

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conduct had too probably been the primary cause of what had happened, but a man who flirts and makes his bow is not necessarily an utter scoundrel. 'He'll be shocked when he hears. I daresay, if he had been a marrying man, he might have thought of Bet, but as a comfortable bachelor he shied at the idea. It was our fault not seeing this all along.'

Three, four days passed, and the brother and sister in their terrible position were the objects of compassion to all around them.

There were paragraphs in the papers about the lost young lady; it was impossible to keep them out. Heads were turned and whispers passed when Lionel was met striding hither and thither with a fierce urgency that told its own tale. Poll could not bear to go out of doors.

And sometimes there would come a fisherman to the door of the lodgings. Would the gentleman commission him to watch the tide? He would be willing to give up a day's work, or several days if an arrangement were made, and nobody knew the coast like Tim Taggs or Joe Bulbous.

'Don't you believe a word they says,' warned Mrs. Lightfoot, shrilly. 'My man's the only man as knows this coast.' The harpy was thirsting for her share of the spoil.

'If anyone can bring me any real information,' said Lionel, 'I will pay for it whatever is thought right. I don't mind what. The captain of the Coastguard can say. But I won't encourage humbug.'

So little did he look like encouraging humbug that a small boy who had been hanging round the cottage gate for some time to see the gentleman come out, could scarcely make up his mind to run forward and solicit his attention when the crucial moment came.

'What is it?' said Lionel, curtly. But he halted on perceiving that the urchin was breathlessly in earnest, also apparently unwilling to court observation. 'What have you to say? Sharp and be done with it!'

'Yer'll not tell my grandf'er?'

'Have you anything to tell *me*?'

'There's only me as can tell it, but grandf'er would flay me if he found out. I saw 'em go. What'll yer give me?'

For answer he was seized by the arm and dragged along the road out of sight of curious eyes possibly on the look-out. Then he was let go with a jerk.

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'I'm not hurting you. Hold your row. If you keep quiet and tell the truth it'll be the better for you. Now then, say that again,' Lionel loosed him, and set his teeth to hear; 'you saw? What did you see?'

'The two on 'em. Her as you're looking for, and him—a gen'leman like yourself. He come here for her to the gate, an' she come out o' the winder up there,' pointing backwards with his thumb, 'and run down to him, an' they went away together. You may b'lieve me,' cunningly.

'And you have kept this to yourself all this time, you young blackguard?'

'Cos I hadn't no business to be out, an' grandf'er said if he cotched me agin he'd wallop me. He wallops awful, grandf'er does——'

'Get on, you beastly little coward. Tell the truth, or I'll wallop you worse than your grandfather would. Where were you when you saw this, and what were you doing? I don't half believe it,' muttered Lionel, suspiciously.

'Harry Bell and me goes after the nests——'

'There are no nests at this time of year.'

'There's birds.'

'And the birds are worth nothing. You'd best tell the truth when you're about it, or you'll get nothing from me; not a brass farthing.'

'It's apples, then;' the small reprobate heaved a sigh, and, probably deciding that he had gone too far to retreat, proceeded volubly. 'We has to git them afore it's light; and Harry would ha' been wi' me, but overslep' himself, and so there's no one but me,' triumphantly, 'as can tell anything. I was the other side o' the hedge. I see a gen'leman come along the road with a bag in his hand. He stopped at Mrs. Lightfoot's gate, and stood about a bit, and then the window went open—that one in the verandy—and she came out like a flash. She just run into his arms. There never was a sound, and they went away as quiet as mice.'

'Which way?'

'Up the road. Couldn't tell.'

'Is there a train or boat so early?'

'There is early boats, couldn't say how early. The buses runs for 'em in the summer. They hardly ever run now.'

'And there was nobody about?'

The boy shook his head with emphasis.

'They don't none on 'em know *now*. They talks before me,

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an' I says nothing. But when I heard you was sayin' you would give—what'll yer give?' suddenly recurring to his first demand.

Lionel took a sovereign from his purse.

'Describe the gentleman. Think a bit, and describe him to my satisfaction, and you shall have this.'

The boy looked covetously at the sovereign, but hesitated. It might be that he would not describe at all to his interrogator's satisfaction, and did that mean that he would therefore be defrauded of his lawful reward? 'I ain't no hand at describin',' he murmured. 'He was just a gen'leman, and he had a big white thing round his mouth, and he'd a stick and a bag, and he come along smokin'—woa, though,' suddenly stopping to fumble in his ragged trowser pockets; 'he throwed this away when she come out, an' I picked it up to sell to old Ben, but I ha'n't seen him since;' and a half-burnt cigar was produced, wrapped in a bit of silvered paper. 'Found that, too, on the road,' said the small informant, eagerly.

In silence Lionel handed him the sovereign. He recalled that he had seen William Farrell strip silver paper off his cigars.

(*To be continued.*)

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The Women of the Salons.

III. MADEMOISELLE DE LESPINASSE.

WHEN some student of the heart gathers together the love stories of the world, he must not forget the letters of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse.

Mademoiselle lives, and will live, not as the most brilliant and sympathetic leader of the brilliant society of France before the Revolution, not as the mistress of d'Alembert, the confidante of Turgot, or the hostess of the philosophers, the Encyclopædists, and the Academicians, but as the woman who sounded all the depths and shoals of emotion and left behind her a correspondence which is still warm with life and wet with tears—an immortal picture of passion.

Mademoiselle's beginning is like her ending—like her youth and her womanhood—a storm. The mother who bears her in shame and secrecy weeps over her and loves her with that ungoverned affection which can bring nothing but misery. She is baptised in a false name—entered, with an exact duplicity which deceives nobody, in the baptismal register dated Lyons, 1732, as the legitimate daughter of the Sieur Claude Lespinasse, *bourgeois*, and Julie Navare. Her real mother, the Comtesse d'Albon, though she can't own her as her child, takes the little creature not the less to her home in the old manor house of Avanches, where she is living apart from her husband. The little Julie has as companion the eight-year-old Camille, the Comtesse's son and heir. Is it safe to suppose that the children—equally innocent though not equally fortunate—play together happily for a while? or must one rather think that that passionate and restless nature which is to ruin an older Mademoiselle Lespinasse makes even her childhood wayward, fretful, and unsatisfied?

She speaks many years after of her mother's affection for her, of the impulsive and sorrowful tenderness which tries to make up to the child for that fatal stain on her birth—for the future which

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such a beginning must bring. The little girl is surely still very young when she finds out that there is some difference—a fatal difference, which a child feels all the more because it cannot understand—between her brother and herself. The Comtesse 'heaps her with benefits.' She educates her herself with an 'excellent education.' She does everything in her power to make wrong come right.

Mademoiselle is sixteen years old when her mother dies and leaves her, worse than an orphan, to the tender mercies of the world.

It is from this time the girl dates all her sorrows. But they begin earlier. They begin with herself. When she looks round her condition is deplorable enough. The considerable sum the Comtesse has left her she has given, with an impulsive generosity quite unwise and characteristic, to Camille. Perhaps she reflects he has more right to it than she has—or never reflects at all. She finds herself almost a beggar. She has indeed brilliant talents, but not the talents that earn a livelihood in any time, and certainly not in her time. She is very quick, bright, and impetuous. Not a person for a subordinate position, this. She has grown up into a tall slip of a girl, not at all pretty, but with something even now in her face beside which beauty leaves one cold. She is so impressionable, so sensitive, a brilliant creature with her nerves so highly strung and her heart so warm, rebellious and imprudent, that one does not need to be very clever to guess that when the Marquise de Vichy Chamrond (the Comtesse's legitimate daughter and Julie's senior by many years) offers her a home in her house, where she is to teach her little boys, and by no means forget she has no legal right to call her sister, the situation will be wholly impossible. But Julie has no choice but to take it. Perhaps she does not know as yet that the Marquise, though more than kin, is less than kind. And she has herself such a charming sympathetic affection for children! 'They have so many graces, so much tenderness, so much nature,' she writes long after. She takes those small nephews to her heart at once, and when she has long parted from their parents in anger and bitterness remembers the little boys with a fond affection.

The Vichy Chamronds have a great house on the Loire. They naturally don't want this brilliant poor relation. They show her that they don't want her. But they are afraid of letting her go elsewhere. If she is generous, they are not. They are suspicious of her ridiculous liberality to Camille. Does she want to thrust herself in among them and claim her mother's name? They accuse her, very likely, of subterfuge and meanness of which their

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hearts are capable but not hers. How she bears that galling servitude for five years is a marvel. 'I could tell you things from my own experience,' says she, looking back at this period of her life, 'that you will not find in the wildest romances of Prévost or of Richardson . . . and that would give you a horror of the human species.' In every utterance of Mademoiselle's one must allow for exaggeration. Her emotions are always at fever heat, and her language as undisciplined as her nature. But it remains a fact that she has decided to leave her only home and enter a convent, when Madame du Deffand, the sister of the Marquis, comes to the house for a long summer visit.

Mademoiselle falls in love immediately with this brilliant old woman, and Madame falls in love with her. They are both so clever, so impulsive, so romantic! The delightfulness of their sudden fine scheme of living together is only heightened by the Vichy Chamronds' opposition. Madame is threatened with blindness, and really needs a companion. No one ever appeals to Julie's sympathies in vain. She has never in her life been anything so dull as judicious or far-seeing, and has the warmest heart in the world. She can't but feel, too, that for her any change must be for the better.

A few days before her final rupture with the Vichy Chamronds she receives Madame du Deffand's written proposal that she shall live with her in Paris. She goes to Lyons and exists somehow on the 'cent écus' which is her whole fortune while the final arrangements are being made, the objections of Camille and the Vichy Chamronds being overcome, and Madame du Deffand trying to be cool and judicial and discuss the matter soberly with her friends. One can fancy the delights, fears, hopes, rising in Mademoiselle's heart. She is now twenty-two years old. The girl, who feels within herself a power and brilliancy not given to one woman in a thousand, is to be the companion of the mistress of one of the most famous Salons in Paris, and to associate daily with the most accomplished society in the world. What is there left to desire?

The history of that *ménage* in the Convent St. Joseph is from the first not a little strange. All the wit of the wittiest capital in Europe gathers round two women, one of whom is old and blind and the other an obscure and nameless dependent, who has neither beauty nor fame. Madame rises very late, and receives after nine o'clock at night. Mademoiselle has her little chamber 'de derrière.' Here in her many solitary hours she cultivates her

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mind, with Locke, Tacitus, Montesquieu, Montaigne, Racine, La Fontaine, Voltaire; reads and re-reads and reads once more her dearest Richardson and the inimitable Prévost; and cultivates a boundless enthusiasm for Rousseau. When is it that the men whom to know is a liberal education first discover that Mademoiselle is something better even than a divinely sympathetic listener? When is it that Mademoiselle first begins to neglect her duty to her benefactress, and forget that she is here to please Madame rather than Madame's friends? There is no woman in the world perhaps who would be superior to the delight of subjugating, by a charm which has no need of beauty, such men as Turgot, Marmontel, Hénault, and d'Alembert. Or if there is such a woman, it is certainly not Mademoiselle. These men meet her soon upon equal terms. Between five and six o'clock in the evening Mademoiselle holds in that famous little chamber 'de derrière' her own Salon, composed of Madame's adherents, and while Madame sleeps.

She has lived with her employer ten years—and deceived her how many there is no means of finding out—when one day the Marquise, waking earlier than usual, comes to Mademoiselle's room and discovers all.

One can picture the scene very well. Here are Hénault, who has been the old woman's lover, and d'Alembert, who has been as her son—the pride, joy, tenderness, of her age. Here is the company who once hung on *her* words, who sought inspiration from *her* lips, and found in *her* sympathy sufficient. And in their midst, with light in her eyes, ardour and animation on her face, is Mademoiselle de Lespinasse.

This is, as it must needs be, the end of all things.

The two women reproach each other bitterly. Mademoiselle is not a little hysterical. She takes enough opium to ruin her nerves for the rest of her life, and to make her fancy herself dying. When Madame comes to her bedside, 'Il est trop tard,' says the Lespinasse, with her tragic instinct. It *is* too late for any reconciliation to be possible. The older and wiser woman recognises that from the first. Mademoiselle takes rooms not very far from the Convent St. Joseph, and once more faces the world alone.

It is during those ten years that the influence which is to mould and then shatter her life has first come to her. Mademoiselle falls in love. It is said that a certain Irishman who visits at Madame du Deffand's is her earliest passion. It may be so. But it is un-

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doubtedly a fact that for the last seven years of her residence with the Marquise she is attached to d'Alembert. How can they help caring for each other? There is so much to draw them together. They are both, writes d'Alembert, without parents, without relatives, and from their birth have experienced neglect, suffering, injustice. D'Alembert, too, is one of the most celebrated men of his age, already a member of the Academy of Sciences, of the *Académie Française*, and to be before long its perpetual secretary and the recognised chief of the Encyclopædists. And he is also, it may be added, one of those inconsequent, sensitive geniuses, as little able to look after himself as a child, and with the same appeal that a child has to a woman's heart. Mademoiselle must be in her early twenties when they first meet.

> Que de défauts elle a, cette jeunesse!
> On l'aime avec ces défauts-là!

quotes d'Alembert long after, looking back at this spring-time. She loves him with that *abandon* and that passionate sincerity which make her love irresistible. The rooms she has taken are too far from the house where he lodges for her impetuousness. She endures the separation for something less than a year. Then d'Alembert falls ill. Mademoiselle flings prudence to the winds for ever, goes to him in the hotel in the Boulevard du Temple, nurses him back to health, and brings him home with her.

From this point one must not look into her history for any such dull steadfast things as self-restraint, honour, decency. The torrent of her passions seizes her and sweeps her to ruin. She is not designedly bad. She is not designedly anything. Her impulses and desires are her rudder, and her shipwreck none the less disastrous for that.

Writing of the early days of this *ménage*, Mademoiselle says that her happiness frightens her.

There seem indeed—suppose one leaves out duty and conscience, and this pair leave them out quite comfortably—to be but few drawbacks. Only David Hume, the historian, passing through Paris and coming to see them, speaks bluntly of Mademoiselle by a name which she deserves too well. The rest of her acquaintance with that careful self-deceit which is so damning a characteristic of the age, conveniently accepts the intimacy as perfectly innocent, and visits Mademoiselle exactly as before.

It is a little while before d'Alembert joins her, and in the year 1764, that she opens her Salon in her little rooms in the Rue de

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Belle Chasse. She is now thirty-two years old. She is certainly not more beautiful than she was as a girl. If the emotions age, she must look greatly older than she is. She has known so many! But her face, that never was young, has a thousand varying expressions to describe her soul, and her heart, which is never old, such warm enthusiasms, such generous indignations, and such an abundance of life and feeling, as, says one of her lovers, would make marble sensitive and matter think.

Her gatherings can hardly need the additional attraction of a d'Alembert even. Those who come presently to see him, stay to listen to her. The chief of all the Encyclopædists, and the most brilliant talker of his age, may be well content to be second to the woman who but a little while ago was nobody and nothing, and who now, by the power of her mind and the charm of her nature, has all witty Paris at her feet.

It is extraordinary to think that this woman, or any woman, can command such an assemblage almost every night for nearly twelve years. She does not even give the little suppers that help Madame du Deffand's Mondays, or the little dinners of Madame Geoffrin. Should she by any chance go into the country or to the theatre, all Paris knows beforehand. Before five she receives her intimates—listens, as only Mademoiselle can listen, to Turgot's plans of reform, or to the hopes of Chastellux for his coming election. After five all the world is admitted.

The meanest *habitués* of this Salon are the flower of intellectual France of the eighteenth century. Here come courtiers, philosophers, soldiers, churchmen. Here are Bernardin de St. Pierre and La Harpe. Here one listens to those splendid theories on humanity and the Rights of Men which, put into practice, end in the Terror. Here are evolved some of the principles of that Revolution which is to destroy first of all the class who evolve them. Here one reads aloud the last play and the latest poem. One may be grave or gay as one chooses. There is all the good in the world, thinks Mademoiselle, in a little mirth and lightness. She holds in her slight hands the threads of a dozen widely differing conversations, and has the supreme gift of being to every one exactly what he wishes her to be.

Can't one fancy her, very tall and slight, moving through the crowded rooms with her little dog at her side, stopping to speak now to this man and now to that, with her heart always in what she says, a little impetuous in speech, keenly sensitive to the lightest change in the social atmosphere, very natural, very

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animated, very quick? When people talk to her they never feel how clever she is, but how clever they are. It is Guibert who says of her that she seems to know the secret of all characters and the measure of every one's mind.

Is it some fine scheme for the good of the people this group are discussing? It must be, by the upturned face, eager and tender, with which Mademoiselle listens to them. She moves in a few minutes to another little *coterie* which is philosophic or metaphysical perhaps; and Mademoiselle has a passion for abstruse thought. Over here they are talking music, or art. The woman of whom it is said that she can appreciate perfectly, each in its degree, a Rubens or the little dead bird of Houdon, the famous painter on enamel, brings into this conversation, as she brings into all conversations, the warmth of human emotions and the vivid charm of her inimitable personality. Her contemporaries unite in speaking of her, as hostess and friend, with such a glow of enthusiasm that after more than a hundred years one still feels for her something of the passion they did.

It is in 1767, and only three years after she has given herself to d'Alembert, that Mademoiselle falls violently in love—with the Marquis de Mora. The Marquis is Spanish, ardent, chivalrous, and five-and-twenty. Mademoiselle is ten years older. But what does that matter? Passion has no age, and, it may be added, no sense of humour. With the Southern blood of de Mora on the one side, and the vehemence of Mademoiselle on the other, it would be vain to expect self-restraint from either of them. The peaceful d'Alembert is quickly swept aside by the rush of their feelings. His only use soon is to listen to the story—though not all the story—of Mademoiselle's devotion to his rival. When de Mora comes back from Ferney, where he has been visiting Voltaire, she flings herself into his arms with a delirious self-abandonment. The fever of this attachment lasts for five years, during which Mademoiselle never knows a rational moment. Then de Mora, with the seeds of a fatal complaint already within him, has to go back to Spain.

They part in an agony of despair. It is d'Alembert who fetches his rival's letters, and brings them to Mademoiselle directly she is awake. And it is to d'Alembert that she leaves as a legacy her papers containing the history of the episode and the certain proofs of her faithlessness to him.

What a pitiful story it is! One is hardly surprised to hear that Mademoiselle does not wait for de Mora's death to betray

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him in his turn. Before that news reaches her Guibert is her lover, and the first wild hours of a new passion have robbed her of the last tattered shreds of her self-respect. Guibert is soldier, author, philosopher—the man of whom Voltaire says 'qu'il veut aller à la gloire par tous les chemins.'

It is in her own Salon Mademoiselle has first met him. He is known to every one by his 'Essai sur la Tactique' and his military feats in Corsica; and half the women in Paris listen, worshipping, while he reads aloud his new tragedy, 'Le Connétable de Bourbon.' With his connection with Mademoiselle begins the correspondence by which she lives.

The letters are from the first, a cry. The mental attitude of the woman who writes them to Guibert, from the house of d'Alembert, and in terms of an ecstatic devotion for de Mora, may well baffle the student of human nature. Yet there is not a page of Mademoiselle's wild outbursts which does not bear upon it the undeniable stamp of a vehement sincerity. Her attachment to d'Alembert has no doubt cooled before this into friendship. But her very first letter unites a headlong devotion to Guibert with a passionate love for de Mora and a wild remorse for the fatality (Mademoiselle calls it a fatality) that made her false to him. It is not too much to say that of these letters there is not one quiet, sane, or prudent. Though they are written in that purest French in which Mademoiselle thinks and talks, they are in no sense a literary composition. They are only the bared heart of that unhappy woman who says of herself, 'Mon Dieu! que la passion m'est naturelle, et que la raison m'est étrangère!'

Guibert is travelling in Germany when she begins writing to him, not because he is obliged to travel, but because he prefers it apparently to being in Paris with her. She writes to him constantly. She is never quite sure of him, as it were. Does she remember too often for her peace that she is forty years old, and has neither beauty nor innocence to give him? Her letters are full of devotion, indeed; but then they are full too of self-reproach —and of M. de Mora. This woman has no subtlety. If it needs art to keep her lover, she will not keep him. The thought of him is with her always. While her passions last, they are meat, drink, air, light, life to her. Even in her Salon—'From the moment one loves,' she says, 'success becomes a weariness. A-t-on besoin de plaire quand on est aimée?' The emotions of the last years have already begun to undermine her health. She is thinner and paler and older-looking now than ever. With d'Alembert she is

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not a little difficult and capricious—full of those impatient imperfections which first make him love her and keep him weakly faithful to the end. She has known Guibert but a very little while when the inevitable punishment of such a connection falls, as always, upon the woman. The excess of her devotion bores him. He must have a little recreation, after all. There is a certain Monsieur de Courcelles—with a daughter. One knows the end of that story.

Mademoiselle receives it, not the less, with a shriek. One can see her face, wild, haggard, and despairing, through the reproaches she writes him. 'You have made me know all the torments of the damned,' she says; 'repentance, hatred, jealousy, remorse, self-contempt.' And Guibert answers to tell her of that other person, 'pretty, gentle, sensitive, who loves me and whom I am created to love.' There is no cruelty so complete and so selfish as the cruelty of a great happiness.

On September 23, 1775, Mademoiselle writes to Guibert: 'Perhaps one never consoles oneself for great humiliations. I wish that your marriage shall make you as happy as it has made me wretched;' and then, 'You are married; you have loved, love, will love, one whose brightness and strength of feeling have long endeared her to you; that is in order, nature, duty; and who would trouble your joy with questionings must be fool indeed. Quand une fois le fil de la vérité a été rompu, il ne faut pas le rajouter; cela va toujours mal.'

Her health is by now utterly broken and wretched. It is her part to stand by and watch the happiness which has ruined hers. She is long past pride, past dignity, past honour. She goes on writing constantly to the man who has abandoned her, conscious that she wearies and burdens him—bitter in her reproaches and her self-reproach—and contemptuous of the wasted love she is not noble enough to hide. Her body is racked by cough and fever. But the soul which frets it to decay has the brilliancy of the last flame. She still receives her friends, has still that tender interest, that perfect understanding, that divine sympathy which are hers alone. She is in bed all day sometimes, with her misery soothed by opium, and gets up at night to listen to this man's hopes of a noble future, to splendid enthusiasms which are to redeem the world. One last flicker of self-respect comes to her before she dies. She will no longer ask Guibert to come and see her. Sickness and sorrow are so dull! 'Point de sacrifice, mon ami; les malades repoussent les efforts; ils leur font si peu!'

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She would not be Mademoiselle if that resolution lasted and her pride triumphed over her passion to the end.

She asks d'Alembert's pardon before she dies. But the last words she writes are to Guibert: 'Adieu, mon ami. Si jamais je revenois à la vie, j'aimerois encore à l'employer à vous aimer; mais il n'y a plus de temps.'

Before such a tragedy as this life one may well pause. What is this woman? A sinner. But if there ever was a sinner in the world unmeet for compassion, it is not Mademoiselle de Lespinasse.

She says of herself with a bitter truth that everything is against her. Her birth of shame gives to her, as to too many other creatures so born, a fatal heritage of vehement passions, without the strength to control them. Her upbringing does not help her. Injustice maddens her. Her splendid mental gifts bring her under the potent charm of those specious philosophies which are enthusiastic for a virtue more than half confused with vice, and of philosophers who appear to think that so long as they talk finely they may live contemptibly. Her quick impulses and 'the most inflammable imagination since Sappho' lead her to deeper ruin. She is capable of remorse, and not of amendment; of noble ideas, without the steadfastness to carry them into action. She is the ship without ballast; without compass; without chart; tossed by every wild gust of feeling; no anchor; no port to make for; and at the helm, no guide.

She points, indeed, her own moral. She sells her soul for happiness, and gains fever, wretchedness, and despair. Her passions hide, even from her dreams, that better love in whose serene depths are mirrored peace, honour, and content; faithful affection for husband and children; the quiet striving after all things great; a noble life; and a happy death. D'Alembert, for whom she has long ceased to care, is true to her; de Mora dies; Guibert is false (his fine 'Éloge d'Éliza' rings as hollow as d'Alembert's 'Lament' rings true.) Her letters are only so many witnesses to her tragedy. It is she who speaks of 'cette maladie si lente et si cruelle qu'on nomme la vie.' 'I have proved the truth of what Rousseau says: "There are moments in life which have neither words nor tears."' 'How misery concentrates! One wants so little when one has lost all.' 'Diderot is right; it is only the unhappy who know how to love;' and 'To love and be loved is the happiness of heaven; when one has known it and lost it, there remains but to die.'

She stands out, in brief, as one of the saddest instances in

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history of the disaster that must needs ensue where the paramount idea of life is not duty—that duty which can make the most unfortunate passion not all ignoble, and teach one to build on the ruins of one's own hopes a temple meet for the gods.

She stands out, too, as one of the most extraordinary social figures of the most remarkable social epoch the world has seen. She rises from nothing. She has no money. ('It is only the bored and the stupid who need to be rich,' says she.) She has very bad health; and her lover, though he speaks of her as having that in her face beside which beauty is a 'cold perfection,' speaks not the less frankly of her *laideur*. Yet as long as the Salon is remembered, so long will be remembered the woman who ruled hers by the power of exquisite sympathy and the most womanly genius that ever woman had. And so long as there exist unrequited or misplaced affection, sin, suffering, and disappointment, so long will the letters of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse make their appeal to the heart.

S. G. TALLENTYRE.

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Kingship in the Nineteenth Century.

THE history of monarchy presents one illustration, among many, of the dangers of political prophecy. 'I think it impossible,' said Rousseau about one hundred and fifty years ago, 'that the great monarchies of Europe have still long to last;' an opinion that was very confidently held by many thinkers in the revolutionary age in the throes of which the eighteenth century ended. It was a widely spread belief that a social and political millennium was at hand, when the world, enlightened by the advancing orb of reason, would emerge from superstition, and the people would rid themselves of princes and govern for themselves. Never perhaps in modern times was the monarchical principle assailed with such bitter animosity. 'The farce of monarchy and aristocracy,' said Thomas Paine, 'is in all countries following that of chivalry, and Mr. Burke is dressing for the funeral. Let them pass quietly to the tomb of all other follies, and the mourners be comforted.' More than a hundred years have gone by since these contemptuous words were uttered, and yet, except in one conspicuous instance, the prediction has turned out to be wrong. Even considerably later there have not been wanting similar confident assertions; as when Mazzini, who was sometimes carried off his feet by the gusts of his democratic zeal, declared roundly that monarchy was a corpse. Yet already this year we have been forcibly reminded that monarchy is a very living institution. The Emperor William II. signalised the first day of what he calls the New Century by an address to his troops—'the nation under arms'—couched in the language with which the world is now familiar, and by pressing his demands for the increase of the navy. 'When one of this world wants something, the pen will not do it unless it is supported by the strength of the sword,' were the words that closed his speech, and they are even more characteristic of the quoter than of King Frederick William I. who originally uttered them. Again, the Czar on the

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Russian New Year's Day issued a rescript to Count Muravieff, his Foreign Minister, in which he praised him for the fidelity and zeal with which he had carried out the imperial will. Lastly, the Emperor Francis-Joseph, at a reception of the Austro-Hungarian Delegations, made use of a convenient opportunity to rebuke Dr. Stransky, an over-zealous Czech, and to declare that where the army was concerned he was irresistibly determined to allow no question of race to impair its discipline or efficiency. It may, indeed, be said that the Emperor William, the Czar, and the Emperor Francis-Joseph have each a customary manner of manifesting to their subjects that they intend their personal authority to prevail. The first makes a speech, the second pens a rescript, and the third publicly engages some prominent man in conversation, the drift of which he takes care should be reported. Each mode is probably the best suited for the conditions of the State in which it is used; but it is the substance, not the form, that is important. For men are thereby reminded of the fact that in this democratic age the monarchical principle is stronger than is commonly supposed. Yet the status of kingship, and men's conceptions of it, have undergone great changes, and it will perhaps be of some interest to consider in what direction those changes tend to move, with especial regard to their development during the century that is now coming to a close.

It is noteworthy, in the first place, that the number of monarchies in Europe has during the present century increased; for, contrary to what might have been expected, none of the newly created States—Greece, Belgium, Servia, Bulgaria, or Roumania—are republican in form. Nor in any of the great monarchies, except in France, has revolution in the long run succeeded. The old kingdom of Hungary has been revived; and if the kingdom of Naples has gone, it has been merged into that of Sardinia. Many impotent grand duchies of semi-royal rank in Germany and Italy have disappeared, but they did not count for much; so that it may be said that the principle of monarchy has, numerically speaking, tended to prevail. Yet it seems impossible to doubt that the gain has been accompanied by some loss, and that what may be called the basis of monarchy has been almost entirely reconstructed. It is, indeed, a matter of not a little interest to observe how the old beliefs, upon which kingship was originally founded, have been gradually corroded by the advances of rationalism and of popular enlightenment; and how

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they have been replaced by new reasonings of a more satisfying kind.

How the belief in the divine right of kings—their former source of so much strength—arose in modern Europe, where the titles of dynasties have been so constantly disputed, it is very difficult to say; but the fact that it prevailed over so many disintegrating influences down to quite recent times, if even now it can be said to be extinct, is a signal proof of its tenacity and power.

> Kings' titles commonly begin by force,
> Which time wears off and mellows into right.

These words of Dryden are almost a literally true description of the general course of history, and yet for centuries the belief in the divinity of kings was not only popular, but the notion was constantly invoked by philosophers and politicians of the absolutist type. Perhaps at all times the apotheosis of princes has been a mental process congenial to mankind; otherwise it would be difficult to imagine how the Romans could ever have deified a group of emperors who were either maddened by lust or deeply tainted with insanity. When a Roman emperor died, the funeral rites were ended by letting fly an eagle to symbolise his flight to heaven; but the remark of Vespasian on his death-bed that he felt that he was being turned into a god—*ut puto deus fio*—has a touch of sardonic humour which suggests that to a robust mind such as his the idea was essentially absurd. Yet it is probably from this deification of the Roman emperors that the subsequent belief in the sacredness of kingship may be at least partially derived. At any rate, when after a long period of darkness and confusion there emerged that wonderful institution, the Holy Roman Empire, the old tradition of the sacrosanct emperors was not forgotten. It is not difficult to see how the chief of an Empire, that loomed large in men's imaginations as the secular side of the visible Church, became encircled, as it were, in a halo of divinity. Nor to those who wished to believe was there wanting what could readily be taken to be the warranty of Scripture—such as the anointing of Saul, the command to render tribute unto Cæsar, and the exhortation of St. Paul to obey the higher powers. The belief, however, in the divine character of the chiefs of the Holy Roman Empire was not long confined to them, for out of policy or jealousy the attribute was very quickly arrogated by other sovereigns also, a piece of usurpation in which they were

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eagerly supported by their subjects, who felt themselves flattered by the glorification of their kings. Such titles as 'Most Christian King,' 'Defender of the Faith,' 'Apostolic Majesty,' and others, which in these days seem grotesque, were adopted as symbols of divinity. There were even philosophers like Filmer who tried to support the belief upon rationalistic grounds. But it derived its greatest force from what was nothing less than a gross and singular superstition—that kings possessed a miraculous power of curing scrofulous patients with their touch. Perhaps the first historical case of the ascription of the power was that of Edward the Confessor, who for his saintly character was thought to be endowed with many kinds of wonder-working attributes. At any rate, by the sixteenth century the superstition was very widely spread, and it is impossible to doubt that, both in England and in France, the reports of the cures effected—told, as they were, with much circumstantial detail—went far to prop the thrones of the Stewarts and the Bourbons. Perhaps there is no similar case in a history of a mere superstition that has had such far-reaching political effects. Readers of Shakespeare will remember how he attributes, no doubt out of compliment to James I., the possession of the power to Duncan, King of Scotland.

> How he solicits heaven,
> Himself best knows; but strangely visited people,
> All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
> The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
> Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
> Put on with holy fingers: and 'tis spoken,
> To the succeeding royalty he leaves
> The healing benediction.

James I., the least kingly of all kings that it is possible to imagine, carefully fostered the belief, and the miraculous touch was ascribed without question to all the Stewart dynasty. In the case of Charles I. marvellous properties were attributed to his blood. So deeply rooted, indeed, was the belief in the royal touch, that even Swift was not entirely free from it, and it is common knowledge that one of Dr. Johnson's earliest recollections was his being taken to Court to be touched by Queen Anne. With the accession of the House of Hanover the practice was dropped, and in England the belief slowly died away; but while it lasted it was something more than a curious phase of thought, and its political results were exceedingly important. The title of

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the Stewart dynasty was not only very far from perfect, but its character was often very far from regal. It is hard to conceive of James I. as, to use an Homeric description of a king, 'a fosterling of Zeus.' But a mere superstition went far to sustain and keep alive the faith in the divine right during times when the monarchical principle might have been irretrievably impaired. During the period of the Commonwealth the following inscription was placed upon a statue of Charles I. that stood at the Royal Exchange: *Exit tyrannus, Regum ultimus.* Yet the creed of the sacred character of kings survived the storm, and in the time of Charles II. it was perhaps stronger than before.

The belief in the divine right not only supported the Stewart House in England, in spite of its follies and its crimes, but it also served the Bourbon dynasty in France. Even Bossuet, magnificent genius though he was, regarded Louis XIV. as little less than God on earth, just as he conceived of God as a kind of Louis XIV. in heaven. The *Grand Monarque*, indeed, 'pontificated,' so to speak, in a manner that was impressive and sublime. But during the eighteenth century the doctrine of the divine right was slowly sapped and undermined. Even the thinkers thought it necessary to attack it. Defoe in his pamphlet *De Jure Divino*, and Locke in his *Treatise on Government*, both brought their artillery to bear upon it; and even Bolingbroke, Tory though he was, treated it with scorn. And so did Hume. In France it quickly fell beneath the blows of the philosophers, and when the French Revolution burst, their criticism had fully done its work. Small indeed was the support that the hapless Louis XVI. and his queen derived from any lingering belief in the divinity of their office. So that when the nineteenth century dawned, it may be said without exaggeration that the idea of the divine right survived in England and France only in the minds of the ignorant and unlettered population. For the French Revolution, with all its horrible excesses, did at least breathe a new spirit and fresh impulses into the world; it came, as Sainte-Beuve says, like the Law from Sinai, amid thunder and lightning; it cleared the air of many fond and foolish notions; it was a great expanding, clarifying, and stimulating force, though Frenchmen have with a pardonable bias perhaps valued it too highly. 'Don't speak ill of my dear Revolution,' said M. Thiers on one occasion; and he was typical of many of his race. Among other beliefs that the Revolution tossed into the lumber-room of exploded superstitions was that of the divinity of kings. But traditions die hard, and this one has

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even yet at least partially survived. Moreover, it was too useful to be totally abandoned. In the so-called Holy Alliance, the work mainly of a religious mystic, the Czar Alexander, there are evident traces of it. And when Napoleon dragged the Pope to Notre-Dame and ordered him to crown him, he wished, we may be sure, to invest his usurpation with some degree of sanctity. At the Restoration the advantages of reviving the tradition were too obvious to be neglected, and Louis XVIII., at heart a cultivated sceptic, was punctilious in maintaining that the grace of God was his title to the throne. Charles X. went even further, for at his coronation at Rheims in 1824 he touched no fewer than one hundred and twenty-one persons for the scrofula, the last historical instance upon record of that superstitious practice. The Revolution of July which brought Louis-Philippe to the throne gave the final blow in France to the belief in the divinity of kings, for the citizen king was the very incarnation of the constitutional monarch; he was, he solemnly declared, the passionate servant of the principles of 1793. In the elder branch of the Bourbon dynasty, it is true, the old belief was fondly cherished, and the Comte de Chambord with his devout imaginings was just the type of man to foster it. Handsome, but entirely ineffective, it was said of him that his head was a palace, with no room in it furnished but the chapel. At any rate, so far as the principle of legitimacy is concerned in France, he may be said to have cast the last clod upon its coffin. France has during the nineteenth century experienced three types of monarchy, that by divine right, that by right of the strongest, and that by right of the people, and she has ended, for the present at any rate, in declining to try the experiment of any of them again.

But it is among the Germans, in whom a vein of mysticism and romance is blent with a good deal of practical shrewdness and sagacity, that the creed of the divinity of kings still lingers longest. King Frederick-William IV. of Prussia, for instance, held it very strongly; he declared that he would never allow a sheet of paper in the form of a constitution to come between him and his people; he was, says Bismarck, 'a religious absolutist with a divine vocation,' who kept 'a mediæval wardrobe in which he dressed up his fancies.' Even the old Emperor William I. clung to the idea. But it was left to his grandson to assert it on every opportunity in its most uncompromising form, and to publicly declare himself

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the figure of God's majesty,
His captain, steward, deputy-elect.

The sacred character of the trust imposed upon him is an idea to which he constantly recurs in his very numerous speeches; nor will it be easily forgotten how Prince Henry of Prussia made famous his departure to China by assuring the Emperor that he was going to preach abroad *the gospel of his Majesty's Sacred Person.* That was a declaration which astounded even the stoutest defenders of the throne. That the Kaiser, who, like Disraeli's Mr. Vavasour, lives in a perpetual 'gyration of energetic curiosity,' has some of the elements of greatness, it is impossible to deny. His conceptions are spacious, his utterance is large, he has the *facultas loquendi imperatoria* ascribed to Julius Cæsar. But when a well-known Liberal professor, Dr. Quidde, a few years ago published a monograph on Caligula and the insanity of the Roman emperors, it was easy for those who could read between the lines to see that a satire was intended. Nor can it be denied that the Kaiser gives just ground of uneasiness to the more thoughtful of his subjects. It, however, lies beyond our province to estimate his character; it concerns us only to consider his own view of his imperial functions and position. And of that he has left us in no doubt. In January last Count Ballestrem, the President of the Reichstag, at a dinner that he gave upon the Emperor's birthday, made an interesting speech, in which he eulogised his sovereign in very striking terms. 'He sets up,' he said, 'an intellectual standard which can be seen from afar . . . in the intellectual sphere he has adopted an attitude towards every question.' And then the Count went on to relate a remark of the Emperor's let drop in conversation: 'I live in an epoch of publicity, of the spoken word, and at the same time *I do not want to be a so-called constitutional monarch who reigns but does not govern.*' The words let in a flood of light upon the Emperor's inmost thoughts. That he should believe himself to be invested by Providence with a kind of sacred trust is not perhaps surprising; but that he should deliberately aspire to play the *rôle* of absolutist over one of the most intellectual nations in the world is almost past belief.

The history of monarchy within the nineteenth century might appear from the examples we have cited to be distinctly one of growing strength; yet, if we look beneath the surface, it may be doubted whether appearances do not deceive. For it is certain that most of the props upon which kingship used to rest have, so to speak, been knocked away. The belief in the divinity of kings,

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the German Emperor notwithstanding, has almost vanished. As a political institution, monarchy is stripped of its adventitious trappings, and stands simply on its merits; it has become, in a word, a mere question of expediency. From this point of view its position has been certainly much weakened. Formerly it was possible for monarchs to derive an immense amount of strength from an outward show of splendour; for Lord Halifax's estimate of monarchy was nearer the truth in his own time than in a more critical age it has become. 'It is,' he said, 'liked by the people for the bells and tinsel, the outward pomp and gildings; and there must be milk for babes, since the greatest part of mankind are and ever will be included in that list.' The royal robes must often have concealed a multitude of sins, and those who were reverenced as great personages were in truth very little persons. Nor is this all. If a king were happily endowed by nature, he could achieve much by sheer force of physical bearing and deportment. Louis XIV. is an instance to the point. Though not in any sense a great man, he possessed to perfection the art of playing the king; there was something majestical about him; he had the regal air, the *βασίλικόν τι* that Dr. Johnson ascribed to Agamemnon. He would, St. Simon tells us, have been every inch a king even if he had been born under the roof of a beggar; there was in him, said Mazarin, the making of four kings and one good man. Now it is probably safe to say that the phenomenon of a Louis XIV. is most unlikely to recur; for, even if the man appeared, the spirit of the age would not endure him. Again, with the decline in the belief of the divinity of kings, much of the old intense feeling of personal loyalty that was almost a religion must tend to disappear; such loyalty, we mean, as that of the 'incomparable' Falkland, that figure so gracious, so prodigal of soul, who in the flower of manhood fell fighting for a cause which he knew was doomed to failure. We can scarcely hope to see his like again. There are few more pathetic things in history than the wonderful disinterestedness with which royalists have devoted lives and fortunes to princes who have too often proved unworthy of their love.

> For loyalty is still the same,
> Whether it win or lose the game;
> True as the dial to the sun,
> Although it be not shined upon.

True it is that when a sovereign exercises by force of integrity

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of character a great influence for good, a strong sense of loyalty may even now animate a people, as all subjects of the Queen have the happiness to know. Still, upon the whole, the age of loyalty, if not gone like that of chivalry, must certainly be waning, for a monarch is in these days apt to be regarded not so much as a man of flesh and blood as the incarnation of a political principle. So regarded, he is not likely to pluck allegiance from men's hearts. There are, on the other hand, in constitutional monarchies certain elements of strength that may compensate kings for the loss of absolute prerogatives. A strong ruler, indeed, may move uneasily in fetters, but the maxim that the king can do no wrong must prove a buttress to a weak one. When Charles II. heard the famous epigram upon himself that he never said a foolish thing and never did a wise one, he neatly turned the tables on his critics by replying: 'Quite true: my words are my own; my acts are those of my ministers.' Even in his time the principle of ministerial responsibility was beginning to be realised. It is also advantageous to a monarch to submit to some degree of criticism in Parliament and in the press; as Bismarck said, it saves him from 'the danger of having blinkers put on him by women, courtiers, sycophants, and visionaries.' In a word, constitutional monarchy may be described as a device for turning average men into tolerable kings; and as a good despot is in truth 'a happy accident,' the constitutional principle may preserve to kingship a longer lease of life than was at one time thought possible. Bismarck, to be sure, once expressed a fear that, though royalists might not be wanting, the supply of kings might fail, and it is certainly curious to reflect how narrow is the source from which the dynasties of Europe are drawn. Germany has been truly described as the nursery of princes, and there is scarcely a royal house in Europe in which there is not a strong Teutonic strain. But the contingency is too remote to be seriously considered. Moreover, men's experience of republics has not so far been such as to dispose them to exchange constitutional kingship for what may at the best turn out to be a very doubtful gain. For between presidents and constitutional kings the difference is less real than apparent. Thomas Jefferson, the third American President, was such a stickler for republican simplicity that he scandalised society by receiving ambassadors in his slippers; but he was a remarkable exception. A president as a rule rather likes to ape the splendour of a court, though he rarely does it with success. The French Royalists, for instance, must have derived no little merriment from the *maladroit* attempts of the late

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M. Faure to maintain a dignity that did not sit easily upon him. Even the old plea of economy has now but little force. The argument that kings are too expensive often used to be invoked.

> Others thought kings a useless heavy load,
> Who cost too much and did too little good.
> These were for laying honest David by,
> On principles of pure good husbandry.

These lines of Dryden's satire contain the thought compressed; but the modern experience of republics has taught the lesson that a president and a king are, where a parliament holds the purse-strings, upon a level from the financial point of view; for, as Hobbes very acutely remarked, 'whereas the favourites of monarchs are few, the favourites of an assembly are many; and the kindred much more numerous than of any monarch.' So that perhaps it may in conclusion be said that though the principle of kingship has, in spite of some manifestations of absolutism, lost much of its original source of strength, yet it is being refounded upon so strong a basis of practical utility, that it seems as likely as ever to endure, shorn somewhat of its splendour, and in an attenuated shape. For nowhere in Europe, outside Russia, can the words *l'état c'est moi* be said to represent a working rule of kingship; not even in Germany, where it may safely be predicted that the Emperor William will have to abate his pretensions. Monarchy in the grand style has probably gone for ever. 'A talented king,' said Thomas Paine, 'is worse than a fool, and a dumb idol better than one animated.' That is a strongly expressed but exaggerated statement of the position of those who hold that a king should reign but not govern, but the position is one which seems likely to be generally accepted. Here at least we may trace one of the results of the nineteenth century of the history of Europe.

C. B. Roylance Kent.

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Becky and Bithey.

NO pleasanter place than Mrs. Meatyard's dairy was to be found at any hour of the summer's day; but it was a busy place too. At early dawn the clatter of bright cans and the lowing of cows in the adjacent yard announced milking time, and men came staggering in with great foaming pails of milk, and poured it, sweet and warm, into the shallow tins prepared for it. A little later mistress and maid alike were busy skimming the thick folds of last night's cream. On churning days the regular *splash, splash* in the outer milkhouse was the forerunner of the pleasant labour of butter-making. On cheese days the huge vat had to be filled with gallons and gallons of milk, and then the rennet carefully measured out, and then Mrs. Meatyard and Rebecca took it in turns to 'work' the curds; and what with this working, and putting the curds into presses, and running off the whey, and cleaning up afterwards, a body, as Rebecca frequently said, would be better off with four pair of hands nor with one.

Nevertheless there was something cheerful and delightful even to the workers about the bustle and stir—the sight of the rich milk, the faintly sour smell of the curds, the pure sweet air that circled round hot faces through the wide-open door, the little shifting lights and shades that played about shining tins and whitewashed walls as the branches of the trees that surrounded the house were set dancing in the wind. Yes, Thorncombe Dairy was a pleasant place, and never more so than on this particular June afternoon, when the roses outside the milkhouse door were in full bloom, and the sweet odours of the old-fashioned flowers in the borders beneath the windows came floating in to mingle with the homelier scents within.

Mrs. Meatyard had duly 'cleaned herself' and changed her dress, and now, with the cuffs of her stuff gown turned up, was delicately enswathing roll after roll of golden butter in small squares of gauze, and packing them when thus protected in

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baskets ready for to-morrow's market. Old Rebecca was busy at the other end with scrubbing-brush and pail, 'swilling down' the shelves. Her spare form was encased in a somewhat faded cotton garment, the sleeves of which were rolled up high; the sparse wisps of her grey hair were ruffled and untidy, but her ruddy wrinkled old face was cheery and good-tempered, and she crooned a song to herself as she scrubbed the boards.

In the outer milkhouse one of the labourers was also at work cleaning up, hissing as he used the broom as though he were rubbing down a horse, and every now and then making a great clatter with the piled-up cans.

Through the open door the imposing form of the 'master' could be seen leaning over the gate which opened into the farmyard, contemplating the operations of two of the farm hands who were engaged in cleaning an outhouse. On the cobble-stones near his feet pigeons were strutting up and down, bowing and cooing; a little group of calves lay sunning themselves in a corner of the yard, flapping their ears and waving their tails as the flies teased them. Cocks and hens were crowing and clucking, pigs were grunting, sheep and lambs in the pasture behind the house were bleating, bees in the lime-blossom were humming, and throughout all the din of outdoor life Rebecca's quavering voice could be plainly heard:

'For Do'set dear
Then gi'e woone cheer;
D'ye hear? Woone cheer.'

But louder even than her ditty sounded all at once a shrill tuneful whistle, and the head of a young man came presently in sight, moving rapidly along the irregular line of hedge that divided the farm premises from the lane, and presently the owner of the head rounded the corner and entered the yard.

'Tis you, Charl'?' observed Farmer Meatyard, without removing his pipe from his mouth. 'You be come in nice time to fetch cows up.'

'Jist what I was a-thinkin',' said Charl'. 'I was kept a bit longer in town nor I looked for, but I did hear sich a funny bit o' noos.'

'Did 'ee now?' inquired his father, much interested.

'Ees, I do 'low I did. That there new show as they be all a-talkin' about—the Agricultural Show they calls it—ye wouldn't never think what they be goin' to give a prize for.'

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'Why, I did hear, all sarts,' returned the father a trifle impatiently. 'Harses and cattle and pigs, and cheese and butter—all they kind o' things. There bain't nothin' so very wonderful i' that. 'Tis much same as other shows—voolish work, I reckon it. Ye mid have the best harse, or the best milkin' cow in the countryside, and yet they wouldn't give en a prize. Nay, they'd sooner gi'e it to some strange beast from Bourne or Templecombe or some sich place.'

'Well, but ye haven't heard my tale yet,' cried the son. 'Jist you try to guess the last thing as I've heard they be a-goin' to give a prize for. 'Tis somethin' livin'—I'll tell 'ee that much, and it isn't neither a harse nor a cow, nor a pig, nor anything as ye'd think likely.'

'A bull?' suggested Farmer Meatyard, who was not an imaginative man.

'Nay now; when I said a cow I meant male or faymale. It bain't nothin' o' that kind, nor yet cocks and hens. Ye'll never guess—'tis the queerest thing! Call mother, and let her see if she can have a shot at it.'

'Come here, Missus!' shouted the farmer excitedly. 'Come here and give your opinion. Here's Charl' come back from town, and he do say they be a-goin' to give a prize at this 'ere noo Show as is a-comin' off next month for summat altogether out o' the common. 'Tis alive, he says, but 'tis neither bird nor beast as I can hear of.'

'Wait a bit,' said Mrs. Meatyard, folding her hands at her waist, and looking out of the rose-framed milkhouse door with placid interest. 'Nay, now—I have it! Bees!'

'No. Bless you, mother, there bain't nothing wonderful nor yet funny about bees.'

'Dear heart alive, what a tease the lad be! Is it a handsome thing, Charl', or an oncommon thing?'

''Tis neither one nor t'other,' replied Charl', exploding with laughter. 'There, I'd best tell you, for you'd never guess. 'Tis a wold 'ooman.'

'Ah, get away, do!' growled his father, much disgusted. 'Don't 'ee go for to tell I sich cock-and-bull stories. A wold 'ooman—who'd go for to give a prize for sich as that?'

''Tis true, though,' retorted Charl'; ''twas in every one's mouth. A prize, they do say, will be given for the woldest faymale farm servant.'

'Well, to be sure,' ejaculated his mother, 'I've heard o' prizes

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bein' give for the finest baby, and somebody did tell I once about a prize bein' give for the beautifullest young girl, but I never did hear o' givin' prizes for ould folks.'

'Tisn't raysonable, I don't think,' commented her lord. 'Nay, it do seem a foolish kind o' notion. Why, if they do go encouragin' o' the wold hags that way, they'll live for ever!'

'I shouldn't wonder,' cried Mrs. Meatyard, disregarding him, 'if our Rebecca didn't have so good a chance as any one. She's a good age, Rebecca is. Ah, I shouldn't wonder a bit if Rebecca was to get it. I think she is the oldest woman in these parts, without it's Mr. Sharp's Bithey.'

'Becky!' screamed Charl' ecstatically. 'Becky! Come here a minute. I've brought some good news for 'ee.'

Becky came to the door, wiping her soapy arms with her coarse apron, and smiling pleasantly if toothlessly at the young man, who was a favourite with her.

'Becky,' cried he, 'how would 'ee like for to win a prize at the new Show what's to be given in the Royal George's grounds next month? There, mother thinks you have got so good a chance as any one.'

'I did hear as they was a-goin' to give a prize for butter,' said Rebecca; 'but all as comes out of this 'ere house be Missus's makin'. I wasn't never no great hand at it. Nay, I can milk and skim and churn right enough; but I haven't Missus's hand on butter.'

'It bain't the butter prize as I mean,' cried Charl'. 'They be a-goin' to give a prize for the woldest 'ooman-servant. I heerd it wi' my own ears, and the prize is to be a butter-dish, and you've just so good a right to it, Becky, as any other! Better! For I don't believe there's sich another old witch in the country.'

'Ye're an impident chap, Charl',' cried Rebecca, somewhat offended. 'I don't want to listen to sich a pack of rubbish! There, I've ha' got summat else to do. Ye mid keep a civil tongue in ye're head, I think. Witch, says he! Tell him to go and drive cows up, Master, else we shan't get through with our work this day.'

'I'll go and drive cows up right enough,' said the youth; 'but ye needn't be so highty-tighty, Beck! 'Tis truth as I be a-tellin' 'ee. Every one be a-talkin' of it in town.'

'Dear, to be sure!' ejaculated Rebecca, partially convinced, but looking to her mistress for confirmation of the strange statement.

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'It do seem queer,' returned Mrs. Meatyard; 'but it's true, Becky; and as I was a-sayin', I think you ought to try for it. You be turned seventy, bain't you?'

'I reckon I must be,' said the old woman, ruminating. 'My hair have been white this twenty year and more, d'ye see; and I haven't a tooth in my head. I must be a tremenjious age, sure!'

''Tis a bit hard to tell wi' such as you, Beck,' remarked Farmer Meatyard, contemplating her thoughtfully. 'You do seem to be sich a dried-up wold stick—ah, and have been so ever since I knowed ye. Ye've never looked a bit different since ye come to this 'ere village. How long ago was that, can ye mind?'

'Well, now, 'tis a bit hard to reckon, Master—one year do seem so like another, and the days do follow each other so fast. I lived down at Childe Okeford till I were thirty year of age, and then when mother died I went to service, and I were ten year or thereabouts at a farm Shillingstone way, and eight year at a public, and fifteen year at another farm a mile out of Sturminster—I think 'twas fifteen year, but it mid ha' been eighteen—and then I've bin here the rest of the time.'

'An' that must be twelve year or more,' put in her mistress, 'for I can call to mind as Charl' there was only just breeched when you did come.'

'Why, woman, you must be comin' on for eighty,' cried the farmer, half admiringly, half disapprovingly. 'Bless me, ye haven't no business to be alive at all.'

'He, he!' chuckled Becky. 'Here I be, ye see, sir; and if there's to be a prize for wold folks, I shouldn't wonder I did get it.'

'I can't call to mind anybody else in these parts as can beat ye if your tale be true,' returned he, 'unless it's Mr. Sharp's Bithey. *She* be a wonderful age, now—I shouldn't wonder if she's turned her fourscore.'

'Lard, no, sir!' cried Rebecca, with a sudden cessation of her laughter, while a flush began to mount in her shrivelled cheeks. 'Bithey! Why, she's no age at all to speak on. She've ha' got very near all her teeth, and her hair—what there is of it, they do say, is as black as can be under that wold woolly net as she do wear. She don't come up to my age, Master!'

'She runs you very near though, Beck,' cried mischievous Charl', beginning to caper with glee. 'She's oncommon hard o' hearin', and she do get the rheumatiz so bad in her j'ints. Ther' be times, Mr. Sharp do say, as she can scarce walk.'

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'Pooh!' cried Rebecca, with fine scorn, 'what signifies that? A child mid get rheumatiz, and I've ha' knowed folks so young as Missus be hard o' hearin'! That don't prove nothin'. There, I must give over talkin' here, and get back to my work.'

She retired, muttering to herself and shaking her head, while Charl', still chuckling, went off to fetch the cows.

He came back in a state of explosive excitement, and immediately called his parents out of hearing of Rebecca, who had stalked loftily past him, armed with stool and pail.

'You'll never guess what I've been doin',' he began. 'Jist as I was crossin' the lane down yonder, who should I see but wold Bithey toddlin' along in front of me; so I hollers after her, and tells her all about the prize, and did advise her to go in for it, and the wold body is that set up about it 'tis as good as a play. She makes sure she is goin' to win it, and thinks nothin' at all o' poor Beck's chance. Lard, 'twill be rare sport to set the two wold folks one again t'other.'

The father laughed jovially, but the mother inquired in an aggrieved tone why he had interfered and lessened poor Rebecca's chance.

'There, she've a-been that excited all the evenin', thinkin' about it—she'll be awful disappointed if she don't get the prize. Besides, I can't but think 'twould ha' been a kind o' honour for we if she was to win it.'

'Maybe she will, all the same,' said Charl'. 'I don't believe Bithey's half so old myself.'

And he went away to do his share of the milking.

The news soon spread all over the village that both Rebecca and Bithey intended to compete for this strange new-fangled prize that was to be given at the forthcoming show, and opinions were pretty evenly divided as to the respective merits of the two aspirants, but much amusement was caused by the seriousness and pertinacity with which each old lady advanced her claims.

On the Sunday following Charl' mischievously brought the rivals into contact by calling back Rebecca just as she had haughtily walked past Bithey on leaving church.

'Come here, Beck, for one minute. Here's Bithey won't believe you are any older nor her.'

Rebecca turned, eyeing Tabitha up and down somewhat disdainfully.

'Ye may believe it or not, as ye please,' she said, 'but you was a little maid goin' to school when I was out in service.'

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'What does she say?' inquired Tabitha, turning to one of the bystanders, for quite a little crowd had gathered round the two.

'She says you are no age at all worth countin',' bawled Charl'. 'She 'lows you be quite a little maid still.'

'Little maid, indeed!' retorted Bithey. 'I know I must be seventy if I'm a day, and I'm a'most sure I'm a good bit more nor that. Why, I be gettin' that weak in the limbs I can scarce get about.'

'Anybody mid get weak in the limbs!' cried Rebecca wrathfully. ''Tisn't no sign of age, that isn't. When I did come to live at Thorncombe Farm, twelve or fifteen year ago, I was a staid body, as anybody mid see; but you—you was quite fresh and well-lookin'. I can mind it well. You did come up to our place for a bit o' lard soon arter I did get there, and you was as straight and as active and as smooth and chuffy in the face——'

'Dear, dear! however can ye go for to tell sich tales, Rebecca?' groaned Bithey, much scandalised. 'I can mind that day so well as you, and I can mind as you did offer to carry the lard for me as far as the gate, for, says you, "You do look mortal tired for sure," says you; "and 'tis a long way to carry it, and you not bein' so young as you was."'

'Oh, faith, Becky, the case is goin' again' you!' shouted Charl'. 'If ye said that, it shows plain as you was treatin' Bithey respectful like, you bein' the youngest.'

'God forgive you, Bithey!' ejaculated the dairywoman. 'Have you no conscience at all? *I* say sich a thing! *I* offer to carry lard for you! 'Twas never my way to go in for payin' compliments to folks, and I'd always plenty to do wi'out makin' out more work for myself.'

'Come, come,' cried a fat good-natured man who had drawn near, 'don't be fallin' out on a Sunday! There must be some way of tellin' your ages. Let's see how far back you can remember, and maybe that'll tell us summat. Can ye mind when Rectory chimbley was blowed down? I were a little chap myself then, but I can remember it.'

'Nay, that was afore my day,' said Becky, much crestfallen. 'I've only been here a matter of twelve or fifteen year.'

'I can mind it!' cried Bithey eagerly. 'I can mind it so well as if it were yesterday. I had my sampler in my hand, and when my mother did call out I run the needle very nigh an inch into my finger.'

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'Then you was a little gurl, for sure!' exclaimed Rebecca triumphantly. 'Ye must ha' been quite a young maid, else ye wouldn't ha' been workin' on a sampler. What year was that, Mr. Joyce?'

'Let's see,' said Mr. Joyce meditatively. ''Twas in the year '48, I think—'ees, I'm very near sure 'twas '48.'

'An' say you was ten years old then, Bithey,' went on the other claimant, with increasing animation, 'say you was ten or twelve—you couldn't ha' been much more, else you'd ha' had more sense nor to be workin' samplers—well, 'tis but a little over fifty year ago—that 'ud leave ye not much more nor sixty. Ye haven't wore so very well, I d'low; but there, 'tis plain sixty's your age.'

'I feel sure I'm a deal more nor sixty,' protested Bithey, almost in tears. 'There, now I think on't, 'twasn't when Rectory chimbley was blowed down as I did run needle into my finger; 'twas when Mr. Sharp's roof took fire. Can you mind when Mr. Sharp's thatch took fire, Mr. Joyce?'

'Nay, nay, 'twas long afore my time.'

'An' *you* must be comin' on about sixty, Mr. Joyce?'

'Ah, I fancy that's about my age.'

Tabitha cast a look of triumph towards Rebecca, who feigned unconsciousness.

'I can mind the time o' the Crimee war,' she announced deliberately.

There was a chorus of derisive comment.

'The Crimean war! Why, that's scarce any time ago,' said Mr. Joyce. ''Twas in the fifties, I think; 'ees, I can remember the time very well myself. That don't go for to prove nothin', Rebecca.'

'Well, there's one comfort,' returned she, undaunted, 'us'll be judged by folks as don't know us one from t'other, and they'll be like to judge us fair. There be things for and against both on us. Bithey's hard o' hearin' and wonderful stiff in her j'ints, and all that'll be in her favour; but if they do go for to judge us wold women same way as they do judge harses, I reckon I've ha' got the best chance.'

'How's that?' cried Charl'.

'Why, if they go for to examine our teeth, to be sure, they'd see as I han't got none.'

And further demonstrating the fact by a wide smile, Rebecca walked away, followed by a burst of mirthful applause.

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On the eventful morning of the Show all the inhabitants of Thorncombe Farm assembled to see Rebecca start. Charl' was to drive her to the town, for, as he explained, it would never do for her to let on she was hearty enough to walk such a distance.

'If I was you, Beck,' he added, 'I'd make out to have a bit of a limp. 'Twould go far to make ye evener like wi' Bithey.'

'Nay,' returned Rebecca stoutly, 'I was never one for makin' out what wasn't true.'

'Smooth down your hair a bit under your bonnet,' advised Mrs. Meatyard anxiously. 'It mid be any colour tucked away like that.'

As this injunction could be obeyed without detriment to her principles, the old woman pushed back her bonnet and pulled into greater prominence her scanty snowy side-locks. Then she climbed into the cart, with a palpitating heart, and sat clutching at her umbrella while they jogged out of the yard, and down the green lane, and out on the dusty high-road.

Mr. and Mrs. Meatyard did not make their appearance at the Show till the afternoon, when most of the judging was over, and only that important part of the programme which related to various feats of horsemanship remained to be carried out.

'Let's hunt up Becky afore we go to look at the jumpin',' said the farmer to his wife, as they passed through the turnstile and threaded their way amid the various stalls and pens containing exhibits from all parts of the neighbourhood. Here, a beautiful little red Devon cow thrust a moist protesting nose through the railings; there, a sturdy black-faced ram made abortive butts with his curled horns at the passers-by; yonder, a pen of cackling geese flapped distracted wings and extended yards of snowy neck with prodigious outcry; and now there was a stampede among the ever-increasing crowd, as a great cart-colt was led past floundering and kicking.

The Meatyards stared about them, and wondered and commented, and had almost forgotten Becky in their interest and excitement, when they suddenly came upon her, walking arm in arm with no other person than her rival Bithey.

'Why, bless me, Rebecca, so here ye be!' cried the farmer. 'And Bithey too. What! Han't ye been judged yet? An' who's the winner?'

'What does he say?' asked Tabitha plaintively of the other competitor, and the Meatyards noticed with surprise that her tone was meek, and indeed confiding.

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'Master do want to know if we've a' been judged yet, my dear,' returned Becky soothingly. 'I reckon he'll be surprised when he do hear how we've a-been used.'

''Ees indeed,' sighed Bithey, and she wiped her eyes with a corner of her shawl.

'There, don't 'ee take on, my dear,' said Rebecca, patting her hand affectionately. 'The poor soul,' she explained, turning to the farmer and his wife, who were gazing at the pair open-mouthed, 'the poor soul do seem to be quite undone. I d'low 'twas a shame to go and disapp'int her so. 'Twill ha' gied her quite a turn—at her age an' all.'

''Tis no worse for me nor 'tis for you, my dear,' put in Bithey with a groan of sympathy. 'You had further to come nor me, an' you must be half shook to pieces a-ridin' in that old cart.'

'In the name o' fortin',' cried the exasperated Mr. Meatyard, 'which on you did get the prize? There you do go chatterin' an' jabberin' and neither of you will tell us which be the winner.'

'You'd never think ——' began Bithey.

''Tis the most unfairest thing you ever did hear on!' exclaimed Becky. 'There was the two of us—the woldest women for miles round, I'll go bail. I'm sure ye did only need to look at Bithey here to see it.'

'And I'm sure,' wailed Tabitha, 'the very sight o' your grey hair did ought to ha' shamed them, Becky.'

Here the impatient farmer made a sudden lunge at them, almost after the fashion of the curly-horned prize ram, and the two old women simultaneously announced in an agitated whimper:

'There, they didn't give the prize to neither of us!'

'Dear heart alive! you don't say so?' said Mrs. Meatyard, after a pause of blank amazement, while her husband uttered a shrill whistle. 'Didn't 'ee get no prize at all, then?'

'Wasn't 'ee so much as "'Ighly Commended," Beck?' cried her master, recovering from his stupor, and uttering a roar of laughter.

'No, sir,' returned Rebecca mournfully, 'I didn't get nothin' at all—nor Bithey neither. They never took a bit of notice after they'd axed how long we'd been in our present sitooations. They went and give the butter-dish to quite a young 'ooman. I don't think she can ha' been more nor fifty-five. 'Ees, sir, if ye'll believe me, a big strapping woman as stout as me and Bithey put together, and so firm on her legs as anything.'

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'Whew!' whistled the farmer again, 'you don't say so! Well, I never did—there must ha' been some reason as you didn't know on.'

'Maybe she was blind,' suggested Mrs. Meatyard. 'That 'ud be a p'int in her favour.'

'No more blind nor yourself, ma'am,' returned Becky almos triumphantly. 'She'd a-been thirty year in the one place—tha was all as I could hear as she could say for herself, and they wen and give her the butter-dish wi'out no more talk than that. So when I did see how upset poor Bithey was—an' she so troubl with the rheumatiz, poor wold body—I jist says to her, "You take my arm, my dear," says I; "you jist come alo to her And she were glad enough to do it.' and pulled

'I d'low I was,' agreed her whilom rival. 'I reg. Then she it oncommon kind. "'Ees," says I, "Becky love," oncommon kind o' you to help me same as you're a-doin' of, for ye bain't so young yourself," says I.'

Mr. Meatyard slapped his thigh and shouted with laughter.

'You've changed your note, I see—both on you,' he exclaimed as soon as he could speak. 'Well, and where are you bound for now?'

'Why, d'ye see, sir,' said Becky, 'her an' me is both tired o' this—we are—jist *about!* And so she says to me, says she, "Let's go over to one o' them little booths over there and set down for a bit, and rest us." Didn't ye, Bithey?'

'I did,' said Bithey, 'and I says, "Becky," says I, "'arter all this standin', and all this talkin', and all the dust and sawdust flyin' about, I'm awful dry," I says; "what would you say," says I, "to a bottle of Pop?"'

The farmer laughed again, but his wife strongly advised the old couple to have recourse to that restorative, and they therefore toddled away together to drown the memory of their differences and, if possible, of their disappointment in a sparkling and innocuous glass.

M. E. Francis.

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A Second Essay in Dreams.

an act, too long delayed, of common courtesy, I must begin quite is Second Essay in Dreams by grateful acknowledgment 'Ti many letters referring to the former essay that I have with a gr able to answer severally. In regard to the first an' you must that came, I did my duty nobly, and acknow- 'In the ne ledged them appreciatively by return of post; but when they began crowding in to the number of four or five daily the strain became too great for my industry and courtesy. They went into their pigeon-hole without a response, and I must needs take the present opportunity of thanking collectively the great majority of those who were good enough to write to me, and beg them to believe that I had every wish to express my gratitude more quickly and more personally, but was unable to do so for lack of enough hands to write. Interest in the subject of the first essay seems to have been aroused more widely than I had ventured to hope—interest due, I fear, to the subject rather than its treatment; but, for all that, it may be that not every one read that first essay (I may mention, in case any may care to refer back to it, that it appeared in the January, 1900, number of LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE), and it may even be that not every one, having read it, remembers accurately the classes into which I there ventured tentatively to arrange dreams in the order of what I conceived to be their most frequent occurrence. I will therefore repeat these classes briefly, so that we may be able to start fairly with a mutual understanding between reader and writer. Let me say yet again, in order that the drift of the business may be perfectly clear, that the classes are arranged in the order of what appears their most frequent occurrence, the 'falling' dream seeming to me to be by far the most frequent, the 'flying' dream of second rank in the order of frequency of occurrence, and so forth. The category in the first essay was as follows:—

1. The falling dream; you are falling over a precipice or down the stairs.

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2. The flying dream, the dream that you can fly.

3. The dream of more or less inadequate toilet, that you are not properly clothed.

4. The dream of not being able to get away from some beast or injurious person or thing that is pursuing you.

5. The dream of being drawn irresistibly to some dangerous place, such as a fire.

6. The dream that some darling wish has been gratified.

7. The dream of being about to go a journey and being unable to get your things into your trunks, &c.

The object that I had in view when I tentatively threw out this suggested category was to induce some who might have given the subject serious thought to come forward and tell us their view of the causes, physical or mental, that produced the different classes, for it is not to be easily believed that the same dreams would occur so often to the same people and to different people without a common cause producing them. Of course, when one starts a hare of this nature one does not know to what lengths or what kind of country it is likely to lead one, and out of the considerable bulk of correspondence that people have been good enough to send me on the subject many very interesting points are noted and issues and questions raised that do not directly throw light on the causes that produce the different dreams. The correspondence that I have received seems to me to contain matter of interest that may be conveniently grouped under several distinct heads. There are some suggestions directly responsive to my question of the causes of the dreams; some dreams that had escaped my own notice or that did not seem of sufficient frequency to be worthy of a class to themselves have been shown to deserve recognition in the form of a separate class; suggestive and interesting additions to the dreams within the classes that I drew up have been contributed, besides many comments on the subject as a whole that are full of interest although they do not advance one's general understanding of the way that the different, well-distinguished, dreams come about. The most interesting and perhaps the most mysterious of the additional classes that have been suggested to me is, I think, what we may call the 'dream within a dream' class. You dream that you are dreaming; you awake, still in your dream, out of your dream, and you go on with the other, and when really awake are conscious both of the outer and of the inner dream, so to speak. This is an experience that has never come to me personally; but it is mentioned by more

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than one correspondent, and is therefore, perhaps, to be placed in a class by itself, having in all cases of its occurrence a common, though surely a very subtle and complex, cause. Perhaps to be mentioned in association with this dream within a dream question is the question of 'dual personality,' which a correspondent, for whose opinion I am bound to have more than ordinary respect, suggests, as an explanation of some of the phenomena of dreams. It is very well known that in the case of certain hypnotic subjects, studied at the Salpetrière and elsewhere, a 'dual personality,' as it is called, has been developed. That is to say, for instance, that a young peasant girl of Brittany, typical of her class and perfectly ignorant of any classical language, will, in a certain stage of the hypnotic trance, imagine herself to be, let us say, a priest of the middle ages, and gabble monkish Latin. Of course it sounds utterly incredible; but the fact is abundantly testified, and I believe that cases have even been known in which, at a further stage of the hypnotic trance, a third personality has been developed wherein the patient acts, thinks, and speaks in a manner perfectly agreeing with this third metempsychosis, as one might almost call it, and perfectly distinct from the action, thought, or speech exhibited either in the natural state or in the earlier stage of the hypnotic trance. However that may be, it is on the dual personality, merely, that my correspondent, in whom I put much faith, takes his stand, suggesting it as an explanation, and the most probable explanation, of some dream phenomena. For example, the instruction of youth has occupied much of his time during the life here below. He has dreamed, according to a well-known tendency that we noticed in the first essay, of dreams to concern themselves with the stuff of waking thoughts, that he was lecturing to an assemblage of sufficiently thick-headed students, endeavouring with some measure of success to make them comprehend an involved argument or subtle point, when, suddenly, just as his eloquence and lucidity had gained their interested attention, the whole train of his thoughts and their own was confounded by a raucous voice shouting behind his back, 'The Prince, the Prince! Make way for the Prince!' The prince, as it turned out, was Ranjitsinjhi, prince of cricketers, and the scene instantly shifted, as it only does in dreams or Drury Lane, to Lord's Pavilion, and the prince himself appeared in the semblance of a fat old Indian nabob—anything but a sharp short-slip. Very well, then, argues my friend, this is only to be explained on the supposition of a joint authorship, a dual personality, of whom

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the one, the good and intellectual Dr. Jekyll, is conducting his dream lecture in orderly fashion until it is suddenly spoiled by the intrusion of the Philistine and raucous-voiced Mr. Hyde with his cricket.

Again, the same dreamer quotes me a dream pointing, in his opinion, to a like conclusion. He is a sufficient French scholar to read French fluently, occasionally, when in the country, finding his vocabulary, or at least his idiom, a little lacking for want of practice. In his dream he finds himself, thus moderately equipped with French, conversing with a Parisian speaking the language with the delicacy and swiftness of finished perfection. Now and again the Englishman has to ask the Frenchman to repeat more slowly. Now, how is it possible, my friend in effect asks me, that I could put into the mouth of my Parisian that perfect and beautiful French and at the same time could find it now and again beyond me to understand it? Surely this, again, must be a case of the dual personality, myself being myself with the 'French of Stratford-atte-Bowe,' my dream-man with his perfect Parisian my second, my dual, self.

I do not agree with my friend in this, for all my respect for his opinion. I could not respect him so much if I could not venture frankly to disagree with him. In the first place, I suspect this fluent Parisian, with his perfect idiom and fluency, altogether. You see, the only evidence that we have of the idiom and the fluency is the effect they produced on the mind of my dreaming friend. That he should imagine a man speaking beautiful French to him is easy enough to comprehend; that he should accordingly have difficulty in understanding his quick speech, and should ask for a repetition, is only in accord with what would be his natural conception of a conversation in which he and a born Parisian took part. There is nothing difficult to imagine in this; but, on the other hand, what is difficult is to imagine that he was a better French scholar asleep than awake, or that the dual personality is the correct explanation. Far easier to credit, according to my thinking, that he imagined the Frenchman's diction more perfect than he could have made it.

And this very consideration brings us into touch with a remarkable fact of dreams that has been noticed long ago—the extremely moderate calibre of dream wit, dream intellect, dream humour, and the mental operations of dreams altogether. It has often been observed that in dreams we seem to have hit now and again on a wonderfully illuminating thought, a remarkably neat

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epigram, or a solution of a problem that has baffled everybody—perpetual motion has probably been solved again and again by dreamers; but whenever one has awakened with any exact remembrance of those achievements, they have proved to waking criticism the merest drivel and only vaguely coherent. This, at least, is my personal experience of the intellectual efforts of dreams, and I believe it to be confirmed by general consensus. On the other side it is only fair that I should note a passage in one of the letters that a correspondent was good enough to write me about the first essay. 'Feats of considerable intellectual energy,' he writes, 'have also been satisfactorily accomplished in dreams—*e.g.* a friend of the writer once composed a parody on Scott's 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' and remembered it quite well in the morning. School-boys and school-girls, too, have worked out problems in their dreams which have defeated their best efforts in consciousness, and they remembered the working and solutions with satisfactory results the next day.'

On this point it is to be said that the fact of composing a parody on the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' does not of necessity amount to a great intellectual performance. It is only the quality of the performance that should be the measure of its greatness, and of that the writer gives us no assurance. To remember the parody in the morning was indeed a feat, but it was a feat of the waking, rather than the dreaming, intellect. In regard to the solution of problems by boys and girls during sleep, I can only say that I have heard no instances in support of it, although it is very true, and the fact was noticed in the previous essay, that a piece of repetition conned over at night and very imperfectly known then, is sometimes remembered quite pat for early school the next morning. There is a strong inference that it must have occupied the mind during sleep; but that does not bring it within the sphere of dreaming as defined by an operation of the mind during sleep of which one is conscious on awaking. It is one of the most curious points in this connection that we seem to have learned the repetition without any consciousness that it has occupied the thoughts during sleep. Common fairness demanded that I should put on record this statement of my correspondent, although it does not agree with my own experience, nor with the experience that I believe to be general. There is the old tale of Coleridge, it is true, and his 'Kubla Khan;' but in the first place it is to be noted that this poem, if composed in sleep at all, was composed in

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the unnatural sleep of opium; and it is permitted to suspect that, while the scenes described were doubtless dreamed, the language in which they were put on paper occurred to the poet's mind as he wrote. If by feats of 'considerable intellectual energy' my correspondent referred only to the range of thought, it would accord with the common experience of all dreamers; but referring it to the power and quality of the thought, as it is referred in the case of solution of hard problems, it is almost certainly at variance with what we commonly find to be the facts. Lawyers are said to have written in their dreams lucid opinions of cases submitted to them. This, if true, and the evidence is strong, is very wonderful; but to accept it as true does not prevent our recording it as very exceptional, nor the fact that most of the intellectual feats that strike us as so brilliant in dreams appear folly to our waking criticism. It is probably this very lack and abeyance of the logical and rational faculty that permits to the dreaming thoughts their immense, their unrestricted, range, a range untrammelled by the hard and fast laws of fact and possibility, with the result that the dreams of some who are most prosaic thinkers in the waking state are marked by the most extensive flights of the imagination. A striking instance, worth recording for the singularity of the dream itself, as well as its illustrative bearing on this general quality of dreams, occurred within the writer's knowledge. A friend of his, of most calm and philosophical cast of mind, dreamed that he saw his face in a mirror. He was surprised to find it covered with grime. On nearer inspection he was yet more startled (with the mild sub-normal surprise of the dream state) to see that each grime mark had the shape of a tiny hand-print, the thumb-mark in each print being a little defective. There was a basin handy, in which he washed his face, and the water forthwith became bemudded by the grime which gradually settled to the bottom of the basin, and as it settled formed itself into the shape of many little hands perfectly formed, save that each hand was a little defective by reason of a deformed and stunted thumb. My friend could think of no occasion of this dream that shows imaginative power so strangely vivid. It is hard to tell the extent to which novelists have drawn from their dream imagination, but probably their debt is considerable. Avowedly Turgenieff and Stevenson did so, and James Payn saw in a dream the main incident in the losing of the *Lost Sir Massingberd*. Probably many another, likely enough without being

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aware to what extent, has drawn from the same source; and, of course, Alice, both in 'Wonderland' and the 'Looking-glass,' moves through pure and simple Dreamland. But that is a different matter from saying that the incidents were actually dreamed.

In investigating the stuff of our dreams, one of the difficulties is that it is so hard to remember that we must judge them and account for them by other standards than we apply to our consideration of the working of our waking intellect. It is this difficulty, I fancy, that led my friend to infer that there was within him a dual personality, only in evidence when he slept, capable of talking pure Parisian. It is so impossible to say how we know, or think we know, our dream creations to be what they are. For instance, to quote another correspondent, whose opinion deserves every consideration, we find ourselves in Harley Street; it is full of shops, yet we know that it *is* Harley Street; or in another well-known street, and we know it to be *that* street, and yet, instead of houses, there are the trunks of beech trees on either hand. In the logic-monger's language we have got the 'denotation,' but the 'connotation' is all adrift. We may suspect that my friend's purest Parisian was like the shops of Harley Street, which, when awake, has never a shop in its long dull length. This friend is one of the many who have known the dream within a dream, to me unknown. That dream is worth transcribing, for the sake of the explanation that he suggests for it. 'I was chatting,' is his account of the dream, 'with a school friend; the scene a familiar walk by a river. We were smoking, and I relating something that had come into my life since I had seen him. Suddenly, feeling unaccountably drowsy, I said, "Fred, old boy, the sun is unbearably hot, let's have a nap. I'll get under this bush." The scene had changed, as it does in dreams. The bush was a whin, the river became bunkers and links, Fred turned into his brother George. This transformation did not affect me, and I laid myself under the whin and was asleep at once. In that sleep I had an inner dream, and, though foggy and ill-defined, I was able, at the breakfast table, to give some outline of it to those around.' The explanation that my friend suggests is as follows: 'That, by some movement of an arm or body while in the original or normal dream, I had drawn the sheet over my head, and become hot and half suffocated; but, being gradual, the sensation did not waken me. The second dream must have been almost instantaneous, for I could not long have suffered the semi-asphyxiation, and when it could no longer be endured, by a motion of the arm I may have

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unveiled, as I had covered, my breathing apparatus, and burst into oxygen instead of carbonic acid gas.'

The explanation, whether or no it be accepted, is ingenious. Mr. Andrew Lang, at the 'Sign of the Ship,' rebukes me, in his humorous and gently chiding way, for not knowing what Mr. Tylor says of savages' dreams in primitive culture, what Mr. Im Thurn, of the dreams of Indians of British Guiana, what the people say who profess to fly, not dreaming, but when awake, naming it levitation, for euphony, and what conclusions the experiments of Maury and Du Prel have led to. Now Maury I did know of, Mr. Tylor I ought to have known of, but had forgotten, and of Mr. Im Thurn (such is fame, or such is ignorance) I had never heard. But in the course of the first essay it did not occur to me that the dreams of savages came within the view I was suggesting of the subject—nor does Maury attack the subject from that view-point; and as for the people who say they fly, to the 'plain man' what they seem to do is expressed phonetically by 'fly' with the initial letter taken off. From one's knowledge of men it seems an hypothesis much more acceptable than the one that they advance. Maury experimented by giving a sleeper pin-pricks to make him dream of spear-thrusts—that is the type of his experiments—and sometimes the sleeper dreamed of spear-thrusts 'quite good,' but sometimes of something quite different, and sometimes of nothing at all—that is, he could remember nothing when he awoke. So what Maury proved amounts to something like this negative conclusion, that the same *sensational* cause will not always produce the same dream effect. And let it be said here, at once, for fear of misunderstanding through inattention, that this is not the same as proving that the same dream is not always produced by the same cause. It does not directly touch that question.

Mr. Lang is inclined to demur to the definition of dream as a mental operation in sleep that is remembered on awaking, on the ground that mental operations of one person while asleep are often made obvious, by speech or action, to another, though the sleeper will perhaps have no knowledge of them when awake. Whether this is to be called a dream depends—on what? On the meaning we ascribe to the word. Now, if we take the view that mental operations go on all the while we sleep, but that in so-called dreamless sleep we forget them, then it is evident that we must limit 'dream' to the mental operations we remember. Otherwise it becomes a name of one constant aspect of sleep, which is not what we want. But if we take the view that these

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mental operations go on intermittently, then 'dream' may have a meaning distinct from 'sleep,' as indicating the moments in which those operations do go on. Whether they go on all the while, or intermittently, there seems to be a division of opinion among the clever people, that is to say, the people who write books about it (which, no doubt, is synonymous). Opinions appear so equally divided that they seem to cancel each other fairly—(it is not the first time that the opinions of the learned have been so divided, nor the first time that it has been noticed; Dean Swift noticed it)—so that we are left with a sheet tolerably blank to put our little opinions on—a very happy condition.

There is no doubt that we can discriminate broadly between two kinds of causes of dreams—external and internal. External are such as affect our senses, even in sleep—noises, heat, and cold. Internal are of two kinds, sensational, as indigestion, and cramped position of limbs, or mental. When we go to sleep the heart beats more slowly, the supply of blood to the vessels of the brain is diminished, and the effect (without going into disquisitions about the different functions of different parts of the brain) is that the higher mental powers of reason and volition are in almost complete abeyance. It is a fact very well known that when the higher processes, which really exercise a considerable control over the lower in sane waking life, are in abeyance, the lower mental processes become much more active, the imagination ranges without a check, following each suggestion of associated idea, or of sense, without any reference to the laws of reasonable probability or possibility. That is why we get the little hand-prints with the defective thumbmarks, the Kubla Khan's gardens, and the rest of the works of imagination. Evidently, with the limits that reason sets on the waking imagination removed, it is impossible to forecast the direction or the length which the train of ideas suggested by association in dreams may take, even if one can perceive the first stimulus that set it working; but it certainly does seem as if there must be some common stimulus of each of the more common and easily defined classes of dreams, and as if the common stimulus ought not to be so subtle as to elude us.

It would run this essay to quite an impossible length if I were to attempt to give an account of anything like all the interesting dreams and dream facts that correspondents have been kind enough to send me; but I must mention one, because it is illustrative of a curious fact that is well known indeed, but very interesting both in its bearing on the dream state in particular,

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and on general psychological phenomena. Some small article had been lost, I forget now what, let us say a key, belonging to one of two sisters who were travelling together. It could nowhere be found. But one night one of the sisters dreamed that she saw the key in the pocket of her travelling bag. She told this dream, on waking, to the other. 'And have you looked in the pocket?' the sister asked. 'No, I have not,' said she, 'for the very good reason that there is no pocket in my travelling bag.' 'Well,' said the other, 'there is a pocket in mine. I will just have a look there on the chance,' and there the key was found. The inference is that the dreamer had seen (with the eye of sense, though not with the eye of observation) the key put into the pocket. Even when the key was so found she had no recollection of seeing it placed there, but the brain had unconsciously recorded the sensation; in course of sleep it had stumbled on that record, and by good luck the sleeper on awaking chanced to remember the mental operation that had taken place during sleep. It is a singular and almost alarming reflection that our brains are stored with countless such records of which we know nothing, nor ever shall know, unless the association of ideas or some peculiar mental state bring them to our notice. In regard to all this side of the subject Miss Cobbe writes very interestingly and suggestively in the essays on Unconscious Cerebration and on Dreams respectively, that are included in her volume named *Darwinism in Morals*. The dream state with its apparently ready obedience to each suggestion arising from association of ideas would seem to be very analogous to the state of hypnotic trance. In both there is the same lowering of the heart's action and diminished blood supply to the brain, and on the mental side the same suspension of the powers of reason with an increase, that is, very probably, a consequence, of some of those mental faculties that we are bound to deem lower. It is also worth noting that the mental operations of the sane dreamer have a close resemblance to the operations of the waking mind of a person suffering from that kind of dementia that comes from an insufficient supply of blood to the brain.

And now, to take up the argument more directly in connection with the point of view which suggested these very superficial and tentative essays, I would say that there seem to me to be only two classes that can usefully be added, out of the mass of correspondence that I have received, to those set down at first, the dream of strange and beautiful scenery, and the dream of hearing

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distinctly a voice in the room. The dream within a dream would seem to be of sufficiently frequent occurrence to make it worthy a class to itself, but probably produced by causes that are too complex to give the most remote hope of discovering its common stimulus in different cases. But the dream that one is in very beautiful scenery, never before seen, or not remembered, although it has never occurred to me, is evidently very general, nor would one conceive it impossible that it may have a cause common to most cases of its occurrence which we might discover; and the same may be said of hearing, with great distinctness, a voice, generally, I think, of some one familiar to the dreamer, who awakes immediately and cannot, for a few moments, escape from the impression that the owner of the voice is actually in the room. This dream has often occurred to me, though I had not realised that it was so common. It is never a long oration that one hears—only a distinct and loudly uttered sentence. Then one awakes, and that is the end. There are stories, I know, witnessed too strongly for one to disregard them, of such voices being the utterance of a person dying at a distance at the moment the sleeper hears them; but they open up a wide and tremendous question far removed from the humble scope of these essays and beside their purpose. The vast majority of such dream voices seem to be without any such significance, and purely the creation of the sleeper's fancy.

A notable feature of this dream is that the voice seems to be heard suddenly—there is no previous apparition of the person to whom it belongs; our recollection, when we awake, is restricted to hearing, very distinctly, the sentence uttered. Miss Cobbe has been kind enough to draw my attention to the fact that the case is exactly the same in the falling dream. There is no dream consciousness previous to the fall. We do not walk up to the precipice and then fall over, but are conscious of the actual fact of falling, and of that only. I will make bold to hazard the conjecture that in both of these cases it is the exceeding vividness of the dream consciousness immediately preceding the awaking that prevents our recollection of any mental operations that may have occurred in our previous sleep.

And now that we have been brought back again to the beginning of the series of dreams, according to the category, and the ground has been cleared of some few of the more striking of my correspondents' remarks on the general subject, I will take the

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classes in their order, and talk about them briefly in the new lights that have been thrown across them.

By way of explanation of the falling dream I find that the common account given of it is that it is caused by a form of indigestion that causes pressure on the heart, and consequent sending of blood to the brain with a jerk. But why this should make us imagine we are falling is still left unexplained, and I fail to see that this 'explanation' puts us farther on our road. It is to be observed that when we say that we 'imagine we are falling' we give a true account of the dream; but when we say we 'feel as if we are falling,' we give, in all probability, an untrue account. For we do not know, the great majority of us, what the sensation is of falling from a great height. What happens to us in the falling dream is therefore something that gives us the impression that we *imagine* we should experience in falling from a height. That is all we can say. One of my correspondents does indeed suggest that the dream is a survival from the time when we lived in trees, and a chief anxiety of our lives was the fear of falling out of them in sleep. But I am not aware that monkeys often fall from trees in their sleep; and, even so, we ceased being monkeys some time ago. If we analyse our impression of falling from a height, we shall find, I think, that a chief factor in it is the moving upward, past our eyes, of stationary objects—as the side of the precipice, &c. If any quaint trick were to be played by our circulation, or any other influence, on our optic nerves during sleep, so as to give us this impression of things moving upwards past us, we should have at once, as it seems to me, material for the construction of the falling dream. Also it would account for the singular fact that so few (though there are exceptions) of the dreamers of the falling dream ever come to the bottom, for we may suppose that most of us are awakened by the vividness of the impression of the stationary objects going upward past our eyes. Of course, I only hazard this as the merest unconfirmed conjecture, which only claims the merit of being, in my humble opinion, a better explanation than I have yet heard or seen offered.

It is also an explanation that, with a slight difference, perhaps might account for the flying dream. Any influence on the optic nerve that might make us appear to see objects moving horizontally below us might conceivably give us the impression that we were moving horizontally above them; and I should very much like to hear whether either or both these dreams come within the category of the dreams known to blind persons, for if either class of these

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so common dreams were constantly excluded from their category the inference would be strong that the dreams were connected with the optic nerves. I believe it to be a tolerably ascertained fact, as it is in accordance with *a priori* probability, that blind persons never imagine themselves in their dreams to be seeing. Their dreams are confined to impressions of the senses that they possess in waking life. Incidentally I may say that among all my correspondents, to most of whom the flying dream is familiar, one only (and it is the only instance I have ever heard of) flies at any considerable height. All the rest of the world skim, with a floating motion, just over the pedestrians' heads. The prone position of the body during sleep is an explanation that is suggested for the flying dream, but one that scarcely strikes me as being very satisfactory.

In regard to the dream of inadequate clothing, I regret to say that two of my correspondents admit appearing in their dreams in a condition of utter nudity, yet with no properly corresponding sense of shame, and a sense of shame there is, yet in no degree adequate to the offence; and while on this point I may say that, whereas two correspondents aver that their moral sense is active in the dream state, so that they feel acute remorse for their evil acts, in the very great majority of instances it seems to be in utter abeyance, so that the mildest mannered and most tender conscienced commit atrocious crimes without a regretful afterthought. By way of explanation of this dream of inadequate clothing, it is suggested that it is produced by the fact that our nightdresses are as a rule of a light material, perhaps giving the impression that we are lightly clad; but the blankets are comfortably thick, and if we are to accept this hypothesis, we ought to find, when we awake from this dream, that we have thrown off most of the bedclothes, which I do not think is the case; and, again, we ought to dream this particular dream more often in warm weather, when one's bedclothing is light, than in winter, when it is heavy. But this, again, does not seem to agree with the evidence. Neither do the changes in the temperature, or indeed any external sensational causes, seem to give adequate explanation of any of the well-defined classes of dreams, although it is possible to induce a sleeper to answer you by addressing him a question that seems suited to the course of his unconscious mental operations as you infer it from his more or less coherent talking. But, broadly, it may be said, I think, that there is no ascertainable common external cause for any of the dreams in

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these classes. The dream of inadequate clothing I would suggest to be an idea inspired by some inconvenience that has actually occurred, as of a person coming into a room unexpectedly while you were dressing, he perhaps mistaking it for his own room. The conceivable cases of the kind are infinite.

The dream of the gratification of a darling wish permits a very similar explanation, and perhaps presents less difficulty than any other class in the category. And the dream of unsuccessful packing, that might perhaps be better termed the dream of exaggerated trivial inconveniences (clergymen dream that they lose their place in church for an hour together, and so on) arise, probably enough, from a remembrance of similar inconveniences actually occurring which the unrestricted dream imagination magnifies according to its manner.

The dream that a beast or bogy pursues you, and that you suffer from a paralysis preventing your escape, as well as the dream that you are drawn irresistibly to a burning fiery furnace or other undesirable place, may arise from a recollection of childish terrors, aided, as has been suggested to me, by the comparative inability to move one's limbs in sleep. My correspondent, who ascribes the falling dream to an inheritance from our anthropoid days, has no trouble in explaining the bogy dream in a like fashion. From my own experience I am satisfied that the bogy dream is nearly, if not quite, always caused by physical discomfort, whether arising from the operations of digestion or the position of the body; but I cannot find that any particular form of the bogy dream follows any particular form of the physical discomfort.

And so, enough. Charming dreams have been communicated to me—a child's dream that the ticket collector came to the door of the railway carriage with the face of a monster; a dream, reminiscent of the myth of Er, where the dreamer died and was put, with a number of others, to look for his soul (the souls were like blown-up bladders lying in a heap) in a big barn; a dream of being in heaven, from which the dreamer was glad to awake, because it gave her 'a feeling of constraint,' and so on, to impossible lengths. I have been rebuked for saying it was unusual to dream of ghosts, because we often dream of people who are dead; but as a rule (though not always) they appear to us as they were in life, and it is only when we awake that we remember, with a bitter pang, that they are dead.

By no effort of will, I think, are we able to suggest dreams to

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ourselves. One correspondent tells me that if he wishes to avoid dreaming of any particular subject he concentrates his last waking thoughts on it, in the assurance that it will then not recur in his dreams; but reason and volition are not always, though they are generally, fast asleep, for many of us are conscious of willing effectively the continuance of a pleasant dream, although we cannot suggest it to ourselves effectively in the first instance. Moreover, when we come to mature years it happens now and then that we have a recurrence of the bogy dream or nightmare that so vexed our childhood, and therein it occurs not very unfrequently that we recognise the torment to be a dream affair, and force ourselves to awake from it, knowing, although we know it to be a dream (a very singular feature of the business), that it will continue to torment us if we let it run its course. This, if nothing else, would suffice to show that reason and volition are not always in complete abeyance during sleep, and, further, the fact that this dream terror or nightmare is so much more common with children than adults, is probably due in great measure to the fact that their less developed powers of reason and will are more easily and completely overcome in sleep. To a rather similar cause we may perhaps attribute the dreams of terror that attend the sleep of those whose powers of mind and will have been weakened by illness, by excessive drinking, or, generally, by any abnormal and prolonged strain on the nerves.

H. G. HUTCHINSON.

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In the Name of a Woman.

By Arthur W. Marchmont,

Author of 'By Right of Sword,' 'A Dash for a Throne,' &c.

CHAPTER XX.

A WARNING.

THE Princess looked magnificent in the fire of anger which succeeded her alarm as she turned to the old Kolfort for an explanation.

'I presume you will scarcely order your soldiers to shoot me,' she said, facing him grandly, her eyes flashing.

I slipped my sword back into its scabbard, and the General made a peremptory sign to the Captain to withdraw his men.

We waited in silence while the order was given, and the men filed out, followed by the Captain.

'Remain in the ante-room,' said the General.

'You mistake me greatly, General Kolfort, if you think your soldiers will be needed for work like this,' cried the Princess. 'Pray what is the explanation of what I saw when I arrived?'

I thought I could best give that, and said:

'General Kolfort had arrested me, and when I refused to give up my sword had ordered these men of his to shoot me.'

'Is this possible?' she cried, her indignation flaming in her face. 'And yet of course it is. I have heard within the last few minutes of what was done last night and of this visit of yours, Count Benderoff, and I hurried here, fearing mischief. Thank Heaven, I arrived in time; but I did not dream such an infamous act would ever be attempted.'

'"Infamous" is a strong word, Princess,' said Kolfort sternly.

'I use it because I can find no stronger,' was the quick, spirited

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retort. 'By what right, and in whose name, do you contemplate such an outrage?'

'The General declared that I was a renegade officer plotting against the reigning Prince, and that I therefore deserved imprisonment in the fortress of Tirnova. The General himself being, of course, so zealous a loyalist, the thought that any one should so conspire was naturally repugnant to him.'

I threw as much irony into my tone as I could, and ended with an intentionally aggravating and somewhat insolent sneer. I wished to put as ugly a complexion as possible on his conduct.

'The matter is one which you and I had better discuss in private, Princess,' said the old man, who was now fast recovering his habitual self-restraint.

'Why in private?'

'Because I prefer it, Princess.'

'I see no reason. The Count is fully aware of all our matters, is one of my most trusted advisers and friends, and his welfare and safety touch me very closely. The matter can be settled here and now.'

'You are presuming much——'

'I do not understand the word "presumption" in such a case, and from you, General Kolfort,' cried Christina, proudly, 'and I will not hear it.'

'If your Highness has no further need of my services, nor of the influence of my Government in your affairs, you have but to say so,' he said in a tone of calculated menace. But he didn't frighten my brave and staunch Princess, and she answered him in a tone of queenly dignity.

'If your services can go no higher than the cold-blooded murder of my friends and adherents, I shall be glad for your Government to release you from a position that you fill in a manner so unworthy of Russia and so bitterly hateful to myself.'

He had drawn a blank in the attempt to intimidate her, and was quick to see and wily enough to abandon it.

'Yet I have not been unmindful hitherto of your interests,' he answered.

'Hitherto they do not appear to have clashed with your own plans and private animosities,' she flashed, with a sting that festered at once.

'This is rather a matter of your private feelings than mine,' he said, with a significant glance in my direction.

'I will not affect to misunderstand you,' she answered readily,

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with mounting colour. 'Our interview yesterday makes that unnecessary. That, as I read it, is the real reason at the bottom of this last act of yours. I gave my word then to marry the Duke Sergius, and I would have kept it at all hazards. But I did not mean, and will not suffer, that my marriage with the Duke should be the death-sentence upon Count Benderoff.'

'You "would have kept" your word. Do you mean——?' He paused; and how I hung upon her reply may be imagined.

'I mean that, as the Duke has involved himself in a quarrel, and been seriously wounded for his pains, I cannot well become his wife the day after to-morrow.'

'There must be no delay,' he retorted quickly.

'Delay!' she cried, her eyes flashing again brilliantly. 'Do you think if you had murdered my friend here, or if you dared to thrust him into a prison, that I would ever make a marriage that at the best must be hateful to me?'

'This friendship of yours threatens to be exceedingly inconvenient; and if you mean to allow it to interfere with urgent matters of State, we may as well abandon all our plans, or look for some other means of carrying them out.'

'If a policy of murder is your only alternative, I agree with you,' she exclaimed, taking up his challenge instantly. 'I will not have the steps of my throne running with blood shed by Russia.'

He bit his lip in chagrin and manifest embarrassment.

He might well be embarrassed. He had fired his two big guns—a threat first to withdraw from her cause and then to throw her over—and had found them both burst at the breech. A long pause followed, in which I watched his face closely. He appeared to come suddenly to a fresh decision, and changed his manner accordingly.

'Well, I am sorry to have distressed you, Princess. What is it you wish?'

'I will not have Count Benderoff, or any of my friends, subjected to interference at the hands of your agents. Their personal freedom and safety are my special charge.'

'The Count is at liberty to leave,' he replied on the instant, in his more customary curt, decisive tone. 'And I trust his future actions will not bring him again in conflict with me. He may take this as a warning.'

'I have done nothing in this case, and need no warning,' I

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said warmly. 'If you allege anything against me, I am prepared to take the consequences, and demand to stand my trial.'

'This is no occasion that calls for mock heroics,' he sneered. 'In my opinion you should be in Tirnova; but the Princess has thought well to interfere in your behalf, and I bow to her wishes —for the present. That is all.'

'For the second time I owe my safety, and probably my life, to you, Princess,' I said, advancing to her. 'I have no words to thank you.'

'If you wish to show your thanks you had better stop that despatch you told me of,' interposed the General, not without a note of concern in his voice.

'There is no need for it if I am to remain at liberty,' I answered, half disposed to smile.

'I am ashamed there should have been this need for my interference, Count,' said the Princess, looking at me and smiling.

'I trust that there may come a chance for me to prove my gratitude,' I replied, scarce daring to meet her eyes; and with that I withdrew.

As I passed through the ante-chamber I was stopped by the Captain, whose men remained there on guard.

'I hope I am to let you pass, Count,' he said most courteously. 'General Kolfort has this moment said I am at liberty to go.'

'You know how strict our discipline is. Will you wait while, as a matter of form, I obtain his confirmation?'

'Most willingly,' I asserted. He went to the General's room, and in a moment returned smiling and holding out his hand.

'I am delighted. I know of you, of course, and, believe me, I have never passed through a more embarrassing minute in my life than that in his room.' His manner was so unaffectedly frank and friendly that I shook his hand cordially, and he came with me down the stairs and out into the street.

'I heard an account of last night's proceedings from one who was at Metzler's house, Count; I hope you do not judge us all by such an instance. I have just heard also what occurred this morning;' and in his tone and manner he contrived to convey a genuine compliment to my skill. 'The Duke is well punished.'

'I shall be glad to hear how he progresses,' I said, as my man brought my horse up.

'I hear that you have an excellent shooting gallery at your house, and that you are a remarkable shot.'

'Will you care to come and see it?'

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'Immensely, and perhaps to try the foils with you;' and his face lighted as though I were granting him a great favour when I asked him to dine with me. I rode off, thankful indeed that I was still free, speculating whether I could in some way attach this Russian to me; and, what was still more important, wondering what lay behind the sudden change in old Kolfort's manner, and whether he was concocting some further subtle plan against me.

Before I reached my house I had resolved on an important step, as the result of these later developments. After I had sent to Zoiloff to let him know what had happened, I wrote a fresh despatch to send to London, embodying much of what I had before written, and giving a brief description of my treatment at the General's hands. I urged at greater length and with more insistence the desirability of steps being taken immediately on the lines I had suggested, declaring that there was necessity for immediate action; that I believed a complete change of front was contemplated by General Kolfort; that the Foreign Office must be prepared instantly with a successor to the reigning Prince—otherwise a *coup d'état* would be carried out, which I was convinced would result in Russia being left the complete master of the position; and that the one key to the situation would be found in timing the Prince's abdication with the finding of a successor who would not be Russia's tool. And I declared strongly in favour of the Princess Christina.

As soon as I had finished it I sent for my servant Markov, who had been away with me the previous night, and explained to him that he was to carry it to Nish, and place it in the hands of the British Consul there, and at the same time deliver a letter, which I wrote to Lieutenant Spernow. This note was to tell him to destroy the first despatch.

'When you leave Nish,' I added, explaining the next step, 'you will return to the frontier by train, and from there to Sofia you must organise relays of horses at distances of from ten to twelve miles, avoiding the main road where possible, so that at any moment I can make sure of a quick, clear journey from here to the frontier. Spare no money in the effort to do the work well and quickly. You must have it complete in four days at the outside, three if possible. Choose your agents with great care, and give no hint for whom the work is being done. If questions are pressed, you can say it is in connection with a wager between Russian officers. I trust you implicitly, Markov,' I concluded.

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'And if you serve me well I will give you such a reward as will make you independent for life.'

He assured me earnestly of his attachment to me, and said that, as he came from that part of the country, he knew just the people who would do what was needed. Then he added a characteristically Bulgarian touch: 'They know me well in those parts, Count, and they hope that some day I shall settle among them. I am looking forward to being able to buy a small farm that I know of there, and marry.' I took the hint.

'Do this for me well, and I will buy the farm for you.'

'My lord is generosity itself!' cried the fellow, his face radiant with glee, and I knew I could depend upon a man of his kind when his personal feelings and self-interest were running in double harness.

My object was, of course, to prepare the means of flight should that become at any moment imperative; and such a contingency grew more probable the more closely I reflected upon what had passed at my interview with the General. And I explained my views to Zoiloff, who came hurrying to me on the receipt of my letter, and told him what I had done.

The Russian officer, Captain Wolasky, dined with me, and we spent an hour together in the shooting gallery. I did my utmost to create a favourable impression upon him, and appeared to be very successful; for he expressed a warm wish that we might see more of one another, and we parted on particularly friendly terms. I was careful, of course, to avoid any reference to political matters; but he himself let fall enough to show me that his work in Sofia was exceedingly distasteful, and that he had little sympathy with Kolfort's policy, and none at all with his methods.

'Russia must, of course, dominate the Balkans; that is the law of Nature,' he said once; 'but I detest a roundabout way of going to a mark when a straight road could be cut with ease. That's old Kolfort's way, however. He's just like a man grubbing in a cellar for coals, and will insist on having every little bit of rubbish through his fingers and storing and binning it for future use, as if he expected the day to come when rubbish would be worth more than coal, whereas one vigorous use of the shovel would give him all the coal he wants at once.'

I was far from displeased to find him out of conceit with the General, but said nothing.

'What could have been more abominable and disgusting than

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his treatment of you to-day?' he exclaimed, when my wine had begun to heat him. 'It's that sort of barbarism that brings us Russians into such ill-repute. I know what would have happened. He would have given that order to shoot you without turning a hair, and then would have drawn up some bogus report or other about you having made a desperate attack upon his life, and have called upon me to witness it. I suppose he hates you for some reason, and that's at the bottom of it. There are plenty of black pages in his past, I can tell you.'

'You had better not,' I answered, smiling. I did not wish him to have the after-reflection that he had been talking too freely. If he were inclined to give me his confidence he should not lack opportunities; and I pressed him warmly, therefore, to come and see me frequently.

He came the next day when Zoiloff was with me, and again on the following day, when Spernow had returned, and we encouraged his intimacy in every possible way. Zoiloff, in the meantime, had made guarded inquiries about him, having at first been disposed to distrust him as a possible spy acting in General Kolfort's interest. He had found out that he was as genuine as he seemed—a man with no family influence to push his interests, of no means of his own, and constantly standing in his own light because of his scruples, and a blunt, rugged way of expressing them.

'A man not to be bought, but to be won,' declared Zoiloff. 'And, once won, to be trusted. He may be valuable to us;' and so indeed the event proved.

On the occasion of his fourth visit I noticed that he was reserved and seemed preoccupied, and while we were all going through our practice in the gallery he joined in it with small zest. We three were even more jubilant than usual. We had been pushing forward our preparations with the greatest energy and activity, and Zoiloff had declared to me his belief that in another ten days or a fortnight we might venture to make the *coup* towards which all our efforts were bent. Men had been sounded in all directions, and fresh adherents had come in in large numbers, and with great enthusiasm.

I myself had not seen the Princess since the memorable interview at the General's house; but she knew of all that we were doing. The marriage had been rendered impossible for the moment because the Duke's wound had taken a turn for the worse, and he lay battling almost for life. We had had no hint

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that our suspicions of a change of front on Kolfort's part had any foundation; and our hopes ran high therefore that, after all, we should yet carry things through with a dash.

When our fencing was over, I observed that Captain Wolasky hung about as if waiting for Zoiloff and Spernow to go; and I dropped them a hint quietly that they had better do so.

As soon as we were alone, the Captain said:

'I am afraid this may be my last visit, Count.'

'Oh no, I hope not. Why?'

'You will not betray my confidence, I am sure. I have received a hint that my coming here is not acceptable to those in authority—to old Kolfort that means, of course.'

'Believe me, I am genuinely sorry. It cuts short what I hoped would be a pleasant friendship.' I spoke in all sincerity, for I liked him. 'But I can understand your position.'

'That is not all,' he added, and then hesitated and paused. I waited anxiously. 'Of course I ought not to say anything to you, but you have been so exceedingly friendly. You may have heard that strange developments are on foot?'

'No, I have heard nothing.' I began to take alarm.

'I am, of course, precluded from telling you their nature; but I should ill return your hospitality if I were not to give you a word of warning. You may prepare yourself for a startling change, likely to involve very serious consequences to you personally—if you remain in Sofia;' and his look said more than his words.

'You mean, I am in some danger?'

'Very grave danger, Count, and not you only.'

'I may not ask you whom you mean?'

'No, I am afraid not. But there is one person in whom report says you take a deep interest. I beg your pardon for even referring to such a matter. But the danger is very grave and—well, the frontier is very near, and not yet closed. I can say no more, and, indeed, I am sure I need not.'

'You have acted the part of a true friend, Captain. How long will the frontier be open? May I ask that?'

'Yes, I am expecting orders at any moment to guard a certain line of it, and the cordon will be very securely drawn.'

This was news indeed, and for long after he had left me I sat brooding over it deep in thought. I was right after all, it seemed; and the cunning old Russian spider had woven a fresh web.

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CHAPTER XXI.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT?

WITH the following day came startling confirmation of Captain Wolasky's warning. While I was with the regiment a letter was brought to me from the Prince requesting me to wait upon him.

I found him labouring under considerable excitement, pacing the floor restlessly and awaiting me impatiently.

'I thought you were never coming, Count,' he said irritably. 'There seems to be no one now on whom I can rely.'

'I came the instant I received your command, your Highness.'

'Then there must have been some strange delay in giving my message. I cannot understand it.'

'Is there anything in which I can serve you?'

'I wish to Heaven you could get me out of this wretched kingdom honourably. That would serve me.' The words burst from him in obedience to an irresistible impulse. 'I am sick and weary to death of it all;' and he continued his restless pacing for three lengths of the room. He stopped abruptly and threw himself into a chair close to me.

'Sit here,' he cried, pointing to the chair next him. 'I want to speak frankly to you.' He paused again, and then laying his hand on my arm said very earnestly: 'My friend, you are playing a deadly game—and, mark me, you are going to be defeated.'

'Your Highness means——?' I asked steadily.

'That your ideal is magnificent and worthy of you, full worthy of any Englishman—but impossible.'

'I am flattered to hear such words from you,' I replied cautiously, but he caught me up and answered sharply:

'For Heaven's sake, Count, don't answer me with any courtly phrasings that come tripping off the lips and mean nothing when spoken. I don't ask you for your confidence, unless you care to give it to me. I'll tell you what I know about you first.'

'The Countess Bokara has no doubt——'

'Yes, of course she has; she has told me all she knows, or guesses, or suspects, or whatever it may be. But while it was only what she said I did not think of seeing you or interfering with you. But I have learnt it now from another source—one vastly more important. And that's what I mean when I tell you that you are steering straight for the rocks and are dead certain

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to be shipwrecked. Listen to me. You are in love with the Princess, and naturally enough people credit you with the intention of trying to climb into the throne by——'

'It is monstrous,' I cried, unable to keep silent.

'I hope your repudiation comes from your heart—I hope it for your own sake; for there is no happiness under such a crown as I wear, Count Benderoff,' said the Prince bitterly. 'Men think of the dazzle, the pomp, and the grandeur, the magnificence, and forget the dangers, the cares, the awful loneliness. If you seek happiness, seek it not in the glitter of a king's garb, but in the frank enjoyment of true manliness. A monarch has mighty opportunities of making others happy, but himself is doomed to sorrow and solitude. There is no solitude that this life can know half so awful in its depression as that which hedges a king. You seek advice, you find intrigue; you hunger for the truth, and they feed you with the bitter apples of flattery; you yearn for the sweet counsel of a friend, and you meet the tempered phrasings of a courtier. Your every word is weighed in the balance of your hearer's self-interest, your every thought is caught still-born and distorted, your every action is judged by the sordid standard of some intrigue, and every motive twisted and dissected, and analysed and maligned, till your very face becomes a mask to hide your mind, lest your enemies should use your looks to help the plans which their malice is spreading under your very eyes. God, it is unbearable.'

I listened in silence to this outburst.

'You wonder why I speak like this to you. I can read it in your eyes—for am I not trained to find the truth in the face and hear the lies in the voice? Well, I would warn you, and more, I would warn that good, true, noble woman whom you love. Time was when I hated her, and believed all the harm that was said of her; but now that I have learnt her real object—to act, not with, but against the bloodsuckers who seek to devour the land—I know her goodness and sincerity. But the movement must fail. The Russians know of it, General Kolfort best of all, and he has already taken his measures to thwart you all. And you will find his hand a heavy one, Count. If the Princess Christina had succeeded in gaining the throne on her own terms—I mean by means of the men you and those with you were seeking to train as her adherents—she must still have failed in her object, and have doomed herself to a lot as miserable and hopeless as mine has been. But Kolfort does not mean her to succeed; and, I warn

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you, the measures of prevention will be sharp, sudden, and terrible in their severity.'

I sat amazed and disconcerted at his words.

'You wonder how I know all this, and set it down to the Countess Bokara. Of course, she has told me; but I have my news straight from General Kolfort himself. You little know Bulgaria or the Bulgarians, or you would have seen the consummate hopelessness of trying to avoid treachery. Every man you have added to your band has been a fresh centre of probable treachery. The rule here is each man for himself; and some one of the men with you was bound to ask himself in time whether he could not gain more for himself by carrying the news to the Russians than by standing true to a desperate cause like your Princess's. Some one has betrayed you; and the betrayal began when your love was known. They do not believe in disinterested love in this country, Count. The peasants may, but no one else. And when that secret leaked out, General Kolfort's task of suborning a traitor became easy enough. If I knew the scoundrel's name I would give it you, that you might cut his heart and tongue out for his cowardice. But, believe me, everything is known —everything. And your knowledge of that grim Russian leader may tell you what to expect.' He spoke with all the earnestness of a troubled friend; and I could not doubt him.

'When did your Highness learn this?' I asked after a pause.

'Yesterday. Three days ago, the General came to me with proposals that showed he had some fresh plans in mind. He was all for my remaining here as reigning Prince, and offered to concede more than half the conditions of freedom of action I had before demanded. It was a pity to disturb the country by a change of rulers; the country was thriving under my wise rule; the people were growing more contented, and the malcontents could be overawed; the advantages of my rule were appreciated in St. Petersburg, and the basis of achieving mutual ends might probably be arranged with honour to me and substantial benefit to the country; and so on for an hour or more he prated. I asked the reason for the change of tone, and he hummed and hesitated, and, in a word, lied. I said I must have time to think; and he gave me till yesterday. Last night he came with his tale prepared—that the Princess was conspiring for an end hostile to both my aims and those of Russia; that you were her right hand and had been set on by her to fight and kill the Duke Sergius, but had succeeded only in wounding him; that your plot was to use

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the Russian influence to gain the throne and then yourself marry her and reign as her consort; and to gain this end you were both prepared to throw the country into the throes of a civil war which God forfend, and so on, till I was sick to death of his intriguing slanders. I tried to lure him on to tell me what he proposed for you, but he contented himself with saying he had all but completed what I might rely upon would be effectual measures of precaution.'

'May I venture to ask how your Highness answered him?'

'How should I answer him but as I have always answered? That I would never bend the knee to Russia; that I did not believe St. Petersburg would ever sanction any such arrangement as he outlined; and that if what he stated of the objects of the Princess were true, I would be the first to abdicate in her favour and join with her in her efforts, shouldering a musket if need be, in the ranks of the men to fight for her; and that would I, Count, if I saw the faintest gleam of a hope of success. But there is not a chance, no jot or tittle of hope.'

'Now that we have been betrayed, that is.'

'Before the betrayal the chances were not one in a hundred; now they are not one in a million. There is but one course for you and for her—flight, and at once.'

'She will not desert the men who have stood by her. Nor shall I,' I answered firmly.

'As you will. The Russian preparations are all but complete; Russian troops are being hurried to the Black Sea; the slightest sign or movement on your part will be seized on as the pretext for measures as drastic as Russian measures commonly are; and you yourselves, you two in particular and all associated as leaders with you, will be treated you can guess how. Russia knows how to treat her friends badly enough; but no one ever yet accused her of not dealing effectively with her enemies. You have been blind, Count; but then a man in love is seldom anything else.'

It was useless to pretend that I was not vastly affected by what the Prince told me. I read in it ruin and worse than ruin to everything, and my heart sank at the prospect before Christina.

'Your warnings, and more, the kindly motives that have prompted them, have moved me deeply, your Highness.'

'They had better move you out of Bulgaria. But that is your personal affair. I have told you, because of the service you rendered to one who is now, I regret, your enemy.'

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'Your Highness knows of the attempt on the Princess Christina's life,' I asked.

'To my shame and sorrow, I do. She must not think that I would have countenanced such a thing for a moment,' he said in a tone of deep pain.

'She does not,' I assured him.

'That you thwarted it is another service you have rendered me, which adds to my eagerness to help you both to safety. But even on the throne here I am powerless to help my friends. Ay, and even my friends are driven to inflict deeper wounds upon me than my enemies.' His manner was that of a weak, hopeless, dejected, sorrow-broken man. 'You have spoken of that deed, and I will tell you. Since I knew of it, I have refused to see the Countess. I cannot see her again; and I learn that in the mad hope of helping my fallen cause she has been in communication with Kolfort, leading him to think that I could be induced to remain here. And I declare to you, Count, I do not pass an hour, day or night, that is not care-ridden by the fear of some yet more desperate deed she may attempt—the consequences of which must fall on my head. Every step she takes adds either to my danger or my disrepute. And I can do nothing.' He wrung his hands in weak unavailing despair.

I rose to leave; and, looking up half-eagerly, he asked:

'And will the British Government do nothing?' The question was so absolutely inconsequential, and suggested motives behind it so utterly at variance with his attitude and words, that I was surprised. At one moment he was declaiming against the miseries of his position, and yet now he was clinging to the throne, like a drowning man to a spar, with a vague reasonless hope that even England would risk a war with Russia to maintain him upon it.

'I have not the remotest right to say a word on that matter, your Highness; but personally I do not think for a moment that any interference can be looked for.'

'Then all is indeed lost!' he exclaimed, throwing up his hands, and sighing heavily. 'Farewell, Count, let it be farewell; and do your utmost to snatch that brave girl you love from the ruin that threatens to overwhelm her.'

I needed no words of his to spur me to such an effort, and as soon as I left the palace, in grievous trouble at all that I had heard, I sent a message for Zoiloff to come to me at once, and hurried

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home to try and strike out some line of action to meet this most dire emergency.

My impulse was to fight—to strike our blow without a day's delay; to take the Prince at his word—if he had meant it; to get him to abdicate on the very next day, and have the Princess proclaimed ruler in his stead. Our preparations were not ready, and the *coup* would be much less effective than if we could have had time to complete everything. But then neither was General Kolfort. He had not openly abandoned Christina's cause, and might be half afraid to oppose her, if once on the throne, and without the aid of the troops which the Prince had told me were being hurried up to his support. For him to cause a civil war was to take a step in the face of Europe which might cost him dear, and force the other Powers to interfere—the one step that Russia dreaded.

Unprepared as we were, and much as we had to gain by a few days' delay, Kolfort had much more to gain. When once his grip had tightened in the way he projected, there would not remain a vestige of hope for us. Clearly, then, if we meant to fight, we must do it at once.

It must be fight or flight.

In regard to the latter, I found Markov had returned, and he assured me he had carried out my plans to the letter—had even improved upon them, for he had told me he had arranged for the last stage of the journey to be by a very slightly known route to the frontier.

'I did this,' he explained, 'because I heard rumours of certain changes as to the guardianship of the frontier roads, and I thought it well to choose the route which would be the least difficult in case of trouble.'

'You have done well, Markov, and have earned your reward,' I said.

'You will let me stay with you to the last, my lord?' he asked.

'I wish it above all things, for I need faithful men about me.'

When Zoiloff came I explained my views, putting bluntly the alternative of fight or flight, and he was all for fighting. But he shook his head gloomily at the chances.

'We have left to the last the most hazardous work of all,' he said, 'and yet in some respects the most important. I mean the winning over of some of those men, the politicians, the men of tongues not deeds, whose names are most before the public. They

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are the most dangerous of all to meddle with, and yet without them I fear for the result. And we cannot draw them to us until we can show that the army is on our side.'

'And what of the army?'

'We have done all that human effort could achieve in the time—but we could not do impossibilities. On the troops in Philippopoli I believe we can count surely. General Montkouroff is Bulgarian to the core, and where he leads the majors will follow. He has been sounded and will act with us. But here in Sofia there is not a regiment, except that to which I and Spernow belong, which would not turn against us. This disposition of the troops has all been arranged by Russia and the traitors who are Russia's friends. The risk is tremendous.'

'There is no alternative but flight, remember.'

'And fly I will not. Come what may, we will strike.'

'If the Princess will,' said I. 'We must see her at once.' And in this mood we started for her house, Zoiloff urging me on the way to see her alone.

'You have more influence with her than all of us put together,' he said quickly. 'I will remain at hand, and you can call me in if you cannot prevail. But you are right, Count, and I am with you hand and heart. We must either strike an imperfect blow at once or abandon everything.'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HOUR OF INDECISION.

My anticipations of the interview with Christina were a mingling of pleasure and apprehension. I was longing to see her. I had not set eyes on her for four days, and, busily as the time had been filled, my thoughts had been constantly with her. I recalled, too, with a feeling of mixed tenderness and pain, how she had then said we must not meet again alone, and at the recollection my pulses thrilled again with the sad sweetness of our acknowledged but never to be avowed love.

The knowledge of her present danger moved me deeply. I had to tell her the ill news myself, and, in telling it, to urge her to take the course which I knew must put an impassable gulf between us. It had been easy enough for me, in consultation with

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Zoiloff, when we were both staggered by this new development, to decide for the counsel of energy and to choose the course which, while loyal to Christina, my Princess, was traitor to Christina, my love. But if she would fly the country, there would be no longer the barrier of a throne between us.

And in the minutes I was alone waiting for her coming, the thought of all I was to lose in losing her, and of all I was to gain if she would consent to flight, threatened to make a coward of me and urged me to plead with all a lover's strength that she should choose the course which would make her my wife. Away from her I could be the impassionate adviser, but in her presence, with the light of her eyes upon my face, with my heart glowing and throbbing with the knowledge of my love for her and hers for me, it would be hard to be more than a lover, and, being that, not to set the hopes and desires of our love beyond all other considerations.

I had to wait some minutes for her; and, as they passed, the struggle grew fiercer, the temptation strengthened, and the fear of losing her waxed until I was almost impelled to call in Zoiloff to prop my stumbling resolve. There were so many arguments to favour flight. The road was still open; the means were instantly available; safety could be won in a few hours—long before this Russian tyrant could strike; the Prince had counselled, even urged it; the Russian captain had done the same; all were convinced that safety could lie in no other course.

And if we struck and failed, what outlook was there but humiliation, ill-usage, a prison, and possibly death? Love was calling to us both on that frontier road, and smiling with the promise of a life of rare delight; and here in the city stood the gaunt shadow of menacing defeat, with all its grim terrors and gloomy threats of ruthless indignity, and quenchless, loveless sorrow and separation. Is it to be wondered at that I hearkened for the moment to the whispering invitation of love, and closed my ears to aught beside?

But before she came I had fought it back, thrusting the temptation away from me as a thing dishonourable and unclean, and I rose to greet her with a heart as full of loyalty as of love. She was looking sad and troubled, and she bowed to me merely, not giving me her hand as on former visits.

'I had not thought that we should be alone again, Count Benderoff,' she said a little formally; and I hoped I could detect in this reception and in the light of her eyes when they fell upon me the sight of a personal feeling of pleasure that needed to be held

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firmly in check. I adopted a tone of formality that equalled her own.

'I had not forgotten your wish, Princess, but I have been compelled by grave circumstances to come to you thus. Have you heard any news? Your anxious looks suggest that you may know what I have to tell.'

'I have heard nothing. Is there bad news?'

'I grieve to say it is of the worst.'

'This time, at least, you are the bearer of it,' she replied, smiling faintly. 'And I can trust you to tell me frankly. What is it?'

I told her plainly everything. First, the warning which the Russian officer, Captain Wolasky, had given me on the previous evening; and his strong advice that she should fly before it was too late. Then, in great detail, all that had passed between the Prince and myself that morning.

She was very pale and much agitated as my narrative proceeded; but she interrupted me scarcely once, and at the close sank back in her seat, and with her hands across her eyes remained buried in thought.

'It is hard news to hear,' she said despondently. 'You say it spells the ruin of everything.'

'It is to the full as hard for me to tell as for you to hear,' I answered gently. 'But it is no moment to flinch from the facts, however ugly. I fear it means the ruin of everything.' At my gloomy words she shuddered, and sat for some minutes silent in dismay. When she turned her face to me, it was so full of anguish and pain that it made my heart ache.

'How can I save those whom I have involved in this?'

'We are thinking of you, Princess,' I answered.

'Oh no, no, not of me!' she exclaimed vehemently. 'For myself I care nothing. Heaven knows, my motives have not been inspired by mere personal ambition. I do not crave a throne, but I have longed, with a passion I cannot perhaps make you feel, to spread the blessing of freedom among the people. For this end I have striven; and now it seems I have failed. Do not think of me. I will not think of myself. But to bring others to ruin is more than I can endure. Tell me—what do you advise? What can I do?'

'There seem but two courses open,' I said, and told her what Zoiloff and I had agreed together.

'You did not think that I would fly and leave those who have

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rallied to my cause to bear the brunt while I was seeking the coward's refuge of safety?' she asked, half indignant that I should even have suggested it.

'No, I did not,' I answered quietly; 'I knew you;' and her eyes thanked me for the words. 'I should remind you, too, that this check has come so suddenly and prematurely for our plans that there are very few who are really involved in any danger. We have barely had time to throw off the veil of Russia's sanction of our efforts, so that there are scarcely more than a handful of us who know the real object of the scheme; and General Kolfort would be unable to bring home even to them any acts against Russia. It is he who has encouraged the plans laid "In the name of a Woman," and his own writing is in evidence to prove it. You will remember my early insistence upon the necessity for obtaining his written sanction. In the face of that I do not see that he could produce proofs to convict any one except our trusty Zoiloff and Spernow, and say two or three others.'

'But yourself?' she cried, in a tone of quick alarm.

'I do not regard the consequences to myself as very serious, Princess,' I said calmly.

'I shall not run away,' she said, taking what I said as an argument in favour of her seeking her own safety, and she paused again to think. 'Could I go myself to General Kolfort; give up everything on condition of his visiting it all on me? I am responsible.'

It was a true woman's offer, and a noble one; but I shook my head.

'I fear it would be hopeless. He would but drag from you all that you could tell him, and then use the information remorselessly, and without a scruple, against those implicated. You would do the very thing you seek to avoid.' Her face fell as she saw the truth of this, and she sighed heavily.

'But this alternative—what is it but a wild forlorn hope? A desperate step with scarce a chance of success? May not the consequences be a thousandfold worse than the worst that can come of doing nothing? Have you thought of what would happen if we failed? You said just now that so far only a few are openly embroiled; but should we not be forcing each man to declare himself, and would not each be marked out plainly as a target for Russian malice?'

'There is the hope of success, even if it be forlorn. There are many of us who think it better to fight and fail than not to fight at all.'

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'I do not like it; I am afraid of it. The chances are so few; the risks so enormous to others. I dare not sanction it.'

'We are men; the cause is a noble one; enthusiasm has spread everywhere, and a lesser spirit has ere now led a feebler movement to success. There is not one of us, I believe, who would stand back in fear.'

'There may be bloodshed,' she cried.

'Much blood has already been shed in the cause of oppression. We must think of the end, not the means. A bold stroke here will bring the army in the south to your standard—and that may do everything.'

'It is a momentous decision to have to make. I cannot make it. I must have time to think.'

'Every hour that delays the decision may turn the balance between success and failure.'

'If I thought we could triumph!' she cried, her eyes flashing and her cheeks glowing for a moment. But she paused, the light died out as quickly as it had come, and she shook her head mournfully. 'I must have time.'

'Let me send for Captain Zoiloff. Hear him.'

'Do you think he can persuade me where you fail, Count?' she asked, her eyes burning again, but with a different emotion.

'At least I would have you hear him, Princess,' I said, dropping my eyes and speaking as evenly as I could command my voice.

While he was sent for I stood in silence, and when he came I told him briefly what had passed. He spoke strongly and bluntly like the sturdy fellow he was; but he could not prevail any more than I, and he left the room rather abruptly.

The Princess looked after him with an expression of the deepest pain, and when she turned again to me I saw the tears standing in her eyes, and her voice was all unsteady as she cried from her heart:

'Does he think I would not do this if I dared?' And throwing herself back in her seat, she pressed her hands to her face, quite overcome with the strain of her emotions.

I waited in much embarrassment, uncertain whether to go or stay. Some moments passed in this tense silence, and then, to my surprise, she turned upon me with some indignation.

'Why did you bring him here to humiliate me like this? Does it give you pleasure to stay and witness my weakness—or what you deem weakness? Cannot you understand what I feel? Is everything to yield place to ambition, and are the dictates of

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humanity nothing to you? Cannot you see what I am suffering, torn in this way by the distracting doubts of such a crisis? Do you think these tears are not as hard for me to shed as the blood of others as innocent of wrong as God knows I am? Why do you plague me until I—— Oh, forgive me my wild words! I don't know what I am saying.' And she passed in a breath from indignation to lament.

'Permit me to leave you now, Princess,' I murmured.

'Would you also leave me in anger? Have I no friend staunch enough to bear with my moods, or true enough to understand me? Yes, Count Benderoff, if you wish to go the way is open to you.' And, rising, she stood erect and proud, and made me a stately bow as of dismissal. 'I can decide and act alone, if need be.' Yet in the very moment of her passing indignation her lip quivered and her breath was tremulous.

'As God is my judge, I have no thought but for you!' I cried, with a rush of passion at the sight of her trouble, and I threw myself on my knee before her. 'Tell me how you wish me to act, and when I have failed reproach me with want of staunchness, but not till then.'

My voice was hoarse and broken.

As I knelt I could hear the quick catches in her breath as she stood over me, and the very rustling of the trembling laces of her dress seemed to speak to me of her sufferings.

'I have wronged you, or worse—I have insulted you, Count. Ah, me! I who know so well how you are indeed my friend! Do not kneel to me. It is I who should kneel to you.' And at that her hand, fevered and trembling, was laid gently in mine, as if to raise me to my feet.

I kissed the fingers, the tender grace of her words of contrition almost unmanning me, and driving out all thought but of my love and my desire to comfort her. I rose, and, still holding her hand, gazed into her eyes, which shone on me through the dew of her tears in a smile of loving confidence.

'I trust you wholly,' she whispered. 'Help me to do right.'

'If I were thinking of myself, I would urge you with every means in my power to fly,' I said in low rapid accents of passion.

'No, no, you must not counsel that,' she cried vehemently. 'We must not, dare not, think of ourselves. Spare me that temptation.'

'You cannot stay here and be safe unless we make this desperate venture.'

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'And the world would say I ran away because I feared for my safety, betraying all who have sought to help my cause; or else that I fled to——' She paused, her face aflame with sudden blushes. 'You would not have me do that?'

'You are my world,' I answered recklessly. 'Listen one moment. In our hearts we all know, Zoiloff as well as any, that the cause is lost. Till I fired him again—knowing how you would shrink from flight—he was saturated with hopelessness. When he heard the ill news, his one thought was how you could be saved. That is the thought of us all. The way to the frontier is still open. I have ready at instant command the means of securing your safety. If you will go, I will stay to check the slanderous tongues whose malice you dread. If you bid me I will never see you again. But for God's sake, I implore you, leave me at least the solace that you are safe.'

The words moved her so that for a while she could not speak, but the clasp of her hand tightened on mine. Then she asked tenderly:

'Do you think the woman in me would know a moment's happiness if you were in danger?'

'Then let it be a woman's decision,' I urged passionately, carried away by the love in her voice. 'Life is all before us.'

'No. It cannot be. Cannot. Must not,' and she shook her head and shuddered. 'You know what this temptation must be to me. Do not urge it. I cannot listen. I dare not yield. I beg you be merciful,' she pleaded.

'Then fly and let me remain,' I said.

'The Princess cannot and must not go.' The words came all reluctantly, but were firmly spoken. I saw my pleading of love was to fail, and my heart sank. 'But you must fly!'

'Christina!' The name slipped in protest from my lips before I thought, and I feared she would resent it; and I felt her hand start.

'That is the hardest plea of all you have used,' she said softly, with a smile of rare sweetness. 'Christina is powerless to resist you, but the Princess must decide this. Do not use that plea again.'

'I must—I cannot lose you,' I cried desperately, 'I love you so.'

'Don't, please, please don't. If I dared to think of myself there would be no gladder fugitive under heaven's bright sky than Christina. There, I have bared my heart to you, as I never

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thought to open it. And by the love I know you have for me, and by the love that answers it in my heart, I entreat you help me to be strong enough to resist you. Let us never have to think that we placed our love before our duty—however hard and stern. Lend me your man's strength; I need it so sorely.' And with a little piteous action of entreaty she placed her other hand on mine, and gazed full into my eyes.

I stood fighting down my wildly roused passion, trembling under its stress like a child, till I conquered it.

'It shall be as you wish,' I said at length. 'We will stay and face this together. But you must not ask me again to desert you.'

'There is a higher happiness than is bounded by our own wishes only,' she whispered.

'I can know no sorrow deeper than my loss of you. But it shall be as my Princess desires;' and I bent and kissed her hands again.

'The sorrow should be the lighter if divided,' she whispered, with a tender reproach for the selfishness of my words.

'The thought made me a coward for the moment. And no man should be a coward whose ears have been blessed by the words which you have spoken, and the knowledge I have gained. Forgive the cowardice.'

'I would I could as easily spare you the sorrow,' she murmured.

'To do that now would be to rob my life of its one great happiness. Come what may for me, I shall never love again;' and with that assurance, which brought all the love in her heart in a rush of eloquent, speaking tenderness to her eyes, I left her, caring little indeed what might happen to me if our union were impossible.

(*To be continued.*)

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At the Sign of the Ship.

THE People is becoming literary, if we may judge by Mr. A. H Millar's articles in *The People's Friend*, a serial published at Dundee. But recently Mr. Millar discovered that Omar Khayyam, the Persian astronomer of the eleventh century, did not write the poems usually quoted as Omar's. Omar and Homer are in the same condemnation; the works of both were the works of somebody else. As to Omar, as far as his quatrains have merit, I attribute it to the late Mr. Edward Fitzgerald, the friend of Tennyson. Not being a Persian scholar, I do not pretend to know (or care much) what Persian, or Persians, wrote the original Eastern meditations on which Mr. Fitzgerald based his little volume. I have long admired it, but the thing has been so overdone that I wish to hear no more of it than Dr. Johnson desired to hear about the Punic War.

* * *

To make up for depriving Omar of his poetry, Mr. Millar now finds that John Gibson Lockhart (the biographer of Scott) wrote a book of which my ignorance never heard before, *The Fudge Family in Edinburgh* (1820). It was in 1818 that Moore published *The Fudge Family in Paris* (Longmans), a work which was popular and is now not much known. Obviously Moore, who had never been in Scotland, did not write on the Fudges in Edinburgh. The author must have been a dweller in that town; he imitated Moore and he dealt in personalities. To these Lockhart was then addicted; he was also a clever parodist, and so far there is nothing against the claim urged by Mr. Millar. Lockhart, in 1819, had written the still interesting work on Edinburgh and its citizens, *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*. Not having seen the Fudge book, I cannot corroborate Mr. Millar's theory that it contains things about Scott not likely to be generally known. It is no proof that the author attributes *Ivanhoe* to Sir Walter,

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for few sane people doubted that *Ivanhoe* was his. Perhaps only a score of people *knew* the secret, but there were not many who did not take it for granted; at least, so I believe. Mr. Millar thinks that Scott's authorship 'was not generally accepted.' The reverse is my own opinion. The author of the Fudges, if not Lockhart, had Lockhart's *Peter's Letters* as a model; so that resemblances may be discounted. The book is really more or less based on Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*. There is the religious, amorous aunt, the letter-writing servants, and so forth. Had Lockhart written the Fudges, he would, *more suo*, have taken care that it was well reviewed in *Blackwood*. I am not aware that it was noticed by Ebony. It would have been unwise in Lockhart to cover in verse so much of the ground which he had just covered in prose. When writing his Life, I found no reference of any sort to these Edinburgh Fudges. On the whole, as far as one can say without reading the book, I think it unlikely that Lockhart was the author. Anybody with a turn for imitation might have done the work, as far as extracts enable us to decide. Hogg could have done the thing easily, though I do not suppose that he did.

* * *

In Sir George Douglas's little book on Hogg reference is made to a theory which once attracted me, that Lockhart had a hand in Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. I do not maintain the theory, yet cannot agree with Sir George Douglas when he says that 'of Hogg's genius Lockhart had nothing.' Surely *Adam Blair* is at least on as high a level as any prose fiction by Hogg! The circumstance that the manuscript of the Sinner is entirely in Hogg's hand proves nothing. Hogg wanted Lockhart to write the *Life of Scott* in his (the Shepherd's) manner, and offered to copy the manuscript to keep up the hoax. Though angry with Hogg about his *Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott*, Lockhart did not reveal this amazing proposal. It was an age of literary mystifications, to which Hogg was prone, as his suggestion proves. Therefore the manuscript of a work of disputed authorship would not be of value as evidence. But I feel convinced that the Shepherd did write his own wild masterpiece about the Justified Sinner—a work never popular, in spite of its remarkable and original qualities. In places, and especially in the passage about the Sinner's suicide, the work resembles Mr. Stevenson's manner, especially in his admirable *Thrawn Janet*. But Hogg drew no characters that live like Allan Breck, Barbara Grant,

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and the Chevalier Bourke. Sir George Douglas appears to think that Mr. Stevenson could not create characters, while Hogg 'can generally place a personality before his reader.' Well, there is no disputing about tastes. If John Silver, Miss Grant, Allan, the Chevalier, and James Mor Macgregor are not placed before Sir George, they are certainly placed before me and many other grateful students. Hogg may have been as successful, but with the exception of the Sinner I have not hitherto been able to read his novels. He *may* have written better ghost stories than *Wandering Willie's Tale* and *Thrawn Janet*: if so, he has been most unrighteously neglected. Indeed, he has been neglected. In Mr. Ward's four volumes of selections from British poets, but one little lyric of the Shepherd's is included: although the selector, in his case, was a kindly Scot, I wish that somebody more scholarly had edited the *Jacobite Relics*, an entertaining but not a trustworthy miscellany. But people were not particular in those days, and Hogg was not a Gaelic scholar, though 'the most extraordinary man that ever wore the maud of a shepherd.' Hogg had a splendid genius for being happy—the least usual kind of genius in poets. His faults were as superficial as they were eccentric: there was no guile in the Shepherd, not a black drop of blood in that big body of his. This is more important than the truth would be of the extraordinary remark that 'James Hogg had probably as good a claim' as Scott 'to gentle blood.' This appears to have been the late Mr. Veitch's opinion; but where are James's quarterings? What do we know about his eponymous hero 'Haug, a more or less mythic Viking'? Of course Hogg *may* be Haig, and the Haigs of Bemersyde are renowned for the antiquity of their house. But the identity needs a deal of proving.

* * *

One of these Haigs, about 1618, tried to involve his own brother in a charge of treason and magic, offering to prove his case in trial by combat. This unutterable scoundrel came to no good end, and is much at the service of any historical novelist in search of a villain. His case reminds me to mention that the prophet who accidentally brought the Lyon Herald to the stake in 1569 (as narrated in the last voyage of this SHIP) may have been the inventor of logarithms, Napier of Merchistoun. At least, Queen Mary's secretary, Claude Nau, says that Napier did prophesy her escape from Loch Leven, and offered to lay five hundred crowns

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on his opinion. There were 'no takers.' Napier did certainly enter into a bond or covenant to find a quantity of treasure, 'by arts to him known,' for another laird. But the bargain did not hold, apparently because Napier was not sure that his friend would give him half profits in a fair and honourable manner. Even a royalty on his book of logarithms would have been more valuable than a Scottish treasure; these were 'sma' sums,' as Bailie Nicol Jarvie says.

* * *

To recommend a novel in this day is to discharge a perilous duty. Still, I venture to hope that many people will be no less entertained than myself by Mr. Wells's *Love and Mr. Lewisham.* For Mr. Wells's apocalyptic and extra-natural romances about Mars and the future I do not greatly care. But Mr. Lewisham is an interesting study of an ambitious scientific student hardly pressed in the conflict between his affection and his career. The heroine, too, falls in love in a nice and natural way; they are both so young and so unlucky that the heart bleeds for them. Mr. Chaffery, the heroine's stepfather, is too clever for a professional medium with forty-four methods of rapping, ten of them his own invention. To be made acquainted with even one method, beyond dislocating the joint of the knee, would be pleasing to me. Of course, I do not count mere thumping the table or floor with a stick. The accomplishment, well done, is rare; the heel of a slipper caused the only raps that I ever heard, and nobody was beguiled. Mr. Chaffery is quite as clever, if not quite so gay, as our old friend Captain Wragge in *No Name.* The Psychical Researcher is rather old-fashioned; nowadays he would detect Mr. Chaffery—these people are always being detected. The life of students at scientific lectures in South Kensington is interesting, and is a new field, with glimpses of romance. Altogether, though not exhilarating perhaps, *Love and Mr. Lewisham* is a book that may be recommended to a friend.

* * *

Tennyson was born to be the delight of all men (except extremely superior persons), and to be the joy of editors. Mr. Churton Collins must have found it a pleasant task to edit the 'Early Poems' (Methuen). No English poet, probably, made so many alterations, large and small, in his verses as Tennyson. Certainly no one profited so much by criticism. Mr. Collins has

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printed the old original versions, the things at which Lockhart laughed, in 1833.

> Dark-brow'd sophist, come not a-near,
> All the place is holy ground;
> Hollow smile and frozen sneer
> Come not here.

So Tennyson had warned reviewers, but the dark-browed sophist did come, and was amusing indeed over the faults which the poet corrected later. The strange thing was that Lockhart, a poet himself, in his moods, and an early appreciator of Wordsworth, noticed nothing but faults in the Tennyson of 1833. As we turn over the Early Poems in Mr. Collins's edition, we cannot too much admire the blindness or the prejudice which failed to recognise their extraordinary and original merits. The earliest piece, probably of 1830, 'Chorus in an unpublished drama written very early,' already contains two of the Laureate's favourite words, 'windy' and 'sallow.'

The mountains are riven

> By secret fire and midnight storms
> That wander round their *windy* cones.

We read of

> The troublous autumn's *sallow* gloom.

Already the boy was picking and choosing his descriptive words, and finding his way to his own style. Even in the poems of 1830 there are but the faintest traces of imitation. 'Mariana' is already a masterpiece. Now let any of the many young poets who ought to peruse this page look through his own verses and candidly ask himself whether they are not the songs of the mocking-bird. If he does not find imitation throughout his rhymes, then he may flatter himself with hopes. At his age, say from twenty to twenty-five (when we all rhyme), I was perfectly well aware that I was a mere mocking-bird, and never dreamed of taking my effusions at a higher rate than mankind esteems amateur drawings in water-colour. Many a disappointment would be avoided by the young minstrel who can face the question, 'Am I original?' Tennyson was original, on the whole. Mr. Collins sees traces of Coleridge; to me they are not very apparent; more apparent is a kind of Leigh Huntishness in the affectations. In one way, of course, Tennyson was voluntarily and consciously imitative—namely, in the re-cutting and re-setting of gems from

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the Greek, Latin, and Italian poets. Mr. Collins notices a number of examples in a way instructive to lettered readers. One parallel he omits, in the lines to J. S.:

His memory long will live alone
  In all our hearts, as mournful light
That broods above the fallen sun,
  And dwells in heaven half the night.

Mr. Collins suggests a parallel in Henry Vaughan's 'Beyond the Veil.' But the stanza, by coincidence or design, is merely a versification of a speech by Claverhouse in *Old Mortality*. I have not the novel by me, but the words occur in a conversation between Morton and Claverhouse, after the battle of Bothwell Bridge.

* * *

I can fancy a later editor making a conjectural emendation in 'Mariana:'

. . . the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot *shriek'd.*

The new editor will read 'squeak'd.' Mice, like ghosts in Shakespeare, squeak; they do not shriek. And it rhymes! An eminent Homeric editor corrects Shakespeare's

Hey, the doxy over the dale!

The language, like that of Mr. Toots's Chicken, is coarse, and the meaning is obscure. Read, therefore,

When crocuses begin to peer
  And *chionodoxa* over the dale,

chionodoxa being a flower of the vernal season. However, Mr. Collins has not yet arrived at conjectural emendations. I hope he is wrong in thinking that 'Œnone' was perhaps suggested by Beattie's 'Judgment of Paris.' This is an unexpected compliment to Forbes's Minstrel's shade, in an age that has forgotten the once admired Dr. Beattie.

* * *

It is a wild conjecture perhaps, but when Tennyson wrote of

The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
In silence,

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I doubt if he merely 'unfolded' the Homeric *κῦμα κωφόν*; perhaps he had the blinded Cyclops of the Odyssey, feeling round his cave, in his mind.

* * *

Mr. Collins has suffered a good deal from his printers. *L'art pour art* is a cruel *coquille*; and, even if Rossetti was a 'mere æsthete,' it is too severe to call him 'Rosetti.' It does appear quaint to praise 'The Vision of Sin' as 'worth a hundred sermons on the disastrous effects of unbridled profligacy.' A profligate, at least if unbridled, is very unlikely to read 'The Vision of Sin,' or to understand it if he does. Like a young lady of Mr. Anstey's, the profligate thinks poetry 'such *footle*, you know.' But the unbridled profligate is just the man to be influenced by a good, rousing, plain spoken sermon about his future prospects. A line in the 'Vision' is connected with an anecdote that throws a ghastly light on the scientific mind:

God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

Professor Tyndall says that he 'once asked Tennyson for some explanation of this line.' To the non-scientific intellect explanation seems superfluous. If Professor Tyndall did not understand, a wilderness of scholiasts could not enlighten him. Poets do not write for students who need notes like this of Mr. Collins:

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls.

'One of Tennyson's most magically descriptive lines; nothing could exceed the vividness of the words "wrinkled" and "crawls" here.' One is reminded of the words 'this Turk' in 'The Ballad of Lord Bateman,' and of the note in which Thackeray expounds the hidden but Shakespearian charms of the phrase. People ought to make acquaintance with the poets in unannotated editions, and then, if they want the learning, seek unto editors. The research of Mr. Collins has been rewarded by the discovery of the Lincolnshire variant of the Brownie who flitted with the farmer. The Lincolnshire word for Brownie is Hob-thrush. The word puzzles an amateur philologist. The same sort of attached Brownie followed Donald Ban (who fought at Culloden), and indeed is heard of in most countries, as Mr. Collins observes. The most recent instance known to me occurred in Brompton within the last twenty years. Mr. Collins's book is most valuable to the lover of poetry who, knowing Tennyson already, is curious

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about his innumerable 'sources' and his ceaseless emendations and alterations. When the Idylls come to be edited, then indeed the toil fairly begins, for the learning of the subject is vast, chaotic, and for the most part set forth in the German language.

* * *

I confess to being almost an extreme Tennysonian, who do not like to hear a word said against the poet. The plays, of course, are, in his case, not 'the thing,' and I could hand over the 'May Queen,' with 'that good man, the clergyman,' to the tormentors. A certain fatuity in the poet's lovers (as in 'Love and Duty' and in the Lord of Burleigh) vexes me, and other disagreeable things no doubt may be said. But I cannot quite agree with Mr. Collins that Tennyson 'appears to have been constitutionally deficient in what the Greeks called *architektonikê*, combination and disposition on a large scale.' In 1838 he wrote, 'If I meant to make any mark at all, it must be by shortness, for the men before me had been so diffuse, and most of the big things, except King Arthur, had been done.' Edgar Poe said that there is no such thing as a long poem, and it is at least true that there is now no such thing as reading a long poem. They suited times of leisure. Theocritus, like Tennyson, found that people would no longer read long new poems; so, like Tennyson, he wrote brief idylls. In another kind of age Tennyson might have shown *architektonikê* enough. But, frankly, it would no longer pay.

* * *

By 1845, when he was thirty-six, Tennyson had become the recipient of the other poets' poems. 'Rascals send me theirs per post from America . . . books of which I can't get through one page, for of all books the most insipid reading is second-rate verse.' Coleridge and Wordsworth could not read Tennyson: they were too old, he was too young. Very soon he was to feel like them: almost every book of verse flew straight at him, like a moth into a candle, though I suppose that such books as Mr. Matthew Arnold's did not automatically assail him. Mr. Browning's arrived quite late, from Mrs. Browning. Nothing is so likely to 'put down' a recognised poet as to flop a book heavily down in front of him. You might as well throw a fly with a heavy splash at a wary old trout. Tennyson's friends cast his verses as lightly as possible over Coleridge and Wordsworth, but

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these old fish hardly looked up at the lure. This is a lesson for young authors. I fear that tickling, not fair fishing—tickling by judicious flattery—is the way to catch the big fish. Praise them; do not try to get them to praise you. That may come later, but the recognised bard swims away when ever so pretty a little book of rhyme is presented to him. He has seen so many! A trout in the Test has been known to rush off with every sign of terror when a real 'olive dun' floated near him. Even *real* poetry—Tennyson's—alarmed Coleridge and Wordsworth. Of course there are exceptions. Southey and Scott used to look at presentation copies, and praise the donors. Mr. Browning, I have been told, was equally good-natured. Perhaps our modern poets rise freely at presentation copies from beginners. On the whole, however, the plan of tickling seems decidedly the likeliest way of catching your poet. 'What I particularly liked about him is that he did not press on me any verses of his own,' so Tennyson wrote about Mr. Swinburne in 1858. Mr. Swinburne must have been quite a boy in 1858, but he was wiser than many much older poets.

ANDREW LANG.

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The Editor of LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE,
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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

OCTOBER 1900.

One of Ourselves.[1]

THE NEW YORK
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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

By L. B. WALFORD,

AUTHOR OF 'MR. SMITH,' &c.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE BACK PARLOUR.

WITHIN the private parlour of Farrell's Bank a conference was being held of a nature never before witnessed in that place. All the partners, save one, were assembled, and whisperings and nudgings had been rife outside when with hasty steps and downcast eyes they had passed through, omitting customary salutations, and disappearing instantaneously within the closed doors of the sanctum.

'They're all in there now except Billy,' nodded a youngster to his fellow clerk, 'and Macmillan with them. What's up?'

'Macmillan has sent for them.'

'But where's Billy?'

'Where's Billy? Look here.'

'Eh?' said the first speaker, dropping his jaw in amazement. For the other had solemnly and slowly winked his eye.

In another moment both were writing busily.

Within the sacred precincts of the parlour the scene was, as we have said, one unparalleled in the annals of the bank, and though a thunderbolt falling at the feet of the worthy gentlemen who had been summoned in haste to the conclave could not have astounded them more, we can guess the nature of the communi-

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cation which the deeply agitated bank manager had found it necessary to lay before them.

Broken exclamations and ejaculations had interrupted him at various points, but he had at length got out all he had to say, and folded up the paper in his hand.

His listeners stirred for the first time. Stephen walked to the window; Thomas looked towards a chair and towards Charles, who was between him and it. 'I—I should like to sit down. I—I—your arm, Charles. We are—greatly indebted to Mr. Macmillan, who has done—has done his duty, has done—done his duty,' he repeated, mechanically. 'Stephen?' looking round; Stephen hastily approached; 'would you?'—and the white face, looking double its size because of its whiteness, was turned appealingly first to one and then to the other, but rested on Stephen; 'will you speak?' in a dull, muffled whisper.

Stephen nodded.

'Would Mr. Thomas take anything?' suggested Macmillan, compassionately. 'Can I get you something, sir? A mouthful of brandy?'

'No, no; nothing, nothing.'

('That was another of his lies,' muttered Stephen to himself. 'Lied all through. Poor old Tom looks more like a teetotaler than a drunkard.')

Aloud: 'Mr. Macmillan?'

Macmillan was all attention. 'As Mr. Thomas says, we are under a deep sense of obligation to you. Your method of procedure has been admirable; only——' The spokesman hummed and hawed, by no means clear of what he was going to say. What he and they all wanted was to hear the whole story over again, to struggle with it, to master it—not as now be stunned by it. 'We fully appreciate your reluctance to act, but you say you have been uneasy for some little time past?'

'I have, sir.'

'Would it not have been—could not something have been done?'

'You know, sir, the confidence we all placed in Mr. William. If he undertook the management of anything, it was sure to be successful. Mr. Thomas,' with a glance towards the armchair, 'never went into any new business without Mr. William's approval. He was the backbone——'

A groan from Thomas.

'We realise all this,' said Stephen, courteously. (In the bank

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parlour he was another man, an infinitely more sensible and agreeable man than in society.) 'And, of course, if it had not been for this misplaced confidence, what has happened could not have been possible. Still, you have been uneasy of late?' He stuck to his point.

'Only during the past ten days or a fortnight, sir. There were things—and yet Mr. William was always able to explain them. He said he had your authority and Mr. Thomas's and Mr. Charles's,' indicating each in turn, 'for taking entire charge during your absence; and as I knew that even when coming here regular——'

'Yes, yes. We understand, then, that he came here up to last Tuesday?'

'Left soon after two o'clock on Tuesday, sir. A little earlier than usual, but he said he had a train to catch. Going down to the Isle of Wight, I think he said, and meant to take a few days' holiday, but whether there or not I don't think was mentioned. He had come back about a week before from Scotland, where he had been shooting——'

'With me,' said Stephen, his eyes rolling at the recollection.

'And as everything had gone on all right during that absence,' proceeded the manager, 'he said to me, laughingly, that he was tempted to leave me in charge again. It was that same night that Mr. Foster came to me saying, did I know Mr. William was drawing very large sums out of the bank? He had been doing that for some time past, sending them, as we supposed, to Mr. Thomas and Mr. Charles——'

'Never a penny did he send me,' burst forth Thomas.

'Nor me,' echoed Charles.

Macmillan bent his head to each.

'Mr. Foster had heard a little talk,' hesitated he.

'Send for Mr. Foster,' said Stephen, curtly.

The head cashier appeared. He had been waiting to be summoned.

We need not weary our readers with accounts of fraudulent transactions, particulars of which were not learned till later, when subsequent events brought about a full exposure; suffice it to say that William Farrell, betraying kinsmen and friends—all, indeed, who had ever placed themselves within his reach—now stood revealed a scoundrel. And William Farrell—where was he?

'Perhaps Mr. Stephen would kindly give us his opinion,' began Thomas, in weak, tremulous accents, and he made an

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involuntary movement towards the man-of-the-world partner with an imploring look pitiable to see. Stephen, who had been drumming on the window-panes with his fingers, reckoning up within himself what he was likely to lose from first to last, turned quickly.

It must be remembered that he had never thought of the Farrell brothers as his brothers, and therefore, staggered as he was by the fatal disclosures, the foundations of the earth did not give way beneath his feet so utterly as beneath those of the simple dupes who had added affection to credulity.

'I think we shall have to find this defaulter,' said he, pompously. 'No steps have yet been taken in that direction, I presume?' to Macmillan.

Macmillan coughed discreetly behind his hand; an almost imperceptible glance towards the cashier was caught and understood by his interrogator.

'Hum—ah—yes,' said he; 'we need not detain Mr. Foster, who has given us most valuable evidence. I shall join you presently——' Aside to him: 'Well, Macmillan?' the coast being clear.

'There is a person, sir—Mr. Thomas, have I your leave to speak freely? Thank you, sir. Mr. William, it was known among us, did not always live at his lodgings in Jermyn Street, although he had been there more regularly of late; but he had—excuse my mentioning it, gentlemen—another establishment. I have—ahem!—seen it myself. Mr. William kept it very quiet—very quiet indeed; but a friend of mine in the neighbourhood got to know the lady, and it's his belief there has been a marriage—yes, Mr. Thomas,' for Thomas had started visibly—'he's sure of it. He can't account for things in any other way, he says. You were asking me if anything had been done, Mr. Stephen. I got my friend to look round by Ivy Lodge three nights ago. He called on me the next morning to say it was shut up, and a board "To Let" on the palings.'

'Ah!' All present drew a deep breath.

'Knowing I was particular for news, my friend went to the agents and found that Mrs. Gray—that was the name she went by—had left for America——'

'For America!'

'On Wednesday last. She was in the habit of going and coming, sometimes staying away a long time; but on the present occasion she asked the agents to let the house for her by the year

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or on lease, and they were to forward all communications to the General Post Office, New York.'

'Wednesday last?' repeated Thomas, looking interrogatively at his cousin. 'I think Tuesday was the day you said he was here, Mr. Macmillan?'

'It was, sir. I thought of that. That was what I said to myself; but it seemed impossible—I couldn't believe it. Then I came in and found Mr. Foster very much upset, and he showed me his books. It was then I wired off to you, gentlemen.'

The gentlemen looked at each other, and, strange to say, it was Charles who opened his lips, speaking for the first time.

'Emma always said there was something of that kind,' said he.

'Emma said so?' Stung by a sudden irritation, Thomas, who had been huddled up in his chair, too weak to hurt a fly, sat bolt upright and glared at his brother. '*Emma* said so?'

'She told me. I should never have thought of such a thing for myself.'

('Bet you wouldn't!' muttered Stephen, aside.)

'She used to laugh at your wife's wanting to marry him off,' proceeded Charles, not above a hit at Priscilla since Thomas had glared at Emma. 'She seems to have known what she was talking about, too. She said he would never marry, and once or twice lately she has said, "I should not wonder if he were married already." She always declared she would make him own to it.'

'Humph!' said Thomas.

'But we have no proof that there is a marriage in the case,' said Stephen, meditatively, 'although certainly there appears to be an entanglement. You had nothing definite to go upon?' to Macmillan.

'No, sir, only the feeling in the neighbourhood. And people generally do know, sir. They know fast enough when there has been no marriage.'

'Where was this—this establishment?'

'Not far from "Swiss Cottage," sir. "Swiss Cottage" is my friend's station.'

'You think, then, that the disappearance of this female and that of Mr. William Farrell date from the same period?' inquired Stephen, keeping his attention to Macmillan, regardless of some byplay between the brothers, who were interchanging reminiscences in undertones.

'I think, sir, there can be little doubt of it.'

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'And that they are gone together?'

'I should say, sir, it looks like it.'

'Nothing has been seen of him or her since Tuesday?'

'She did not leave till Wednesday, sir.'

'Right. I recall you said so. The Isle of Wight was, of course, a blind. The two were off that night for America.'

'That seems likely, sir.'

'And to search for him there,' said Stephen, now addressing himself to the other partners, 'would be like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. He has outwitted us, and can snap his fingers at us. You, Thomas, were kept at Homburg—I was asked to persuade you to remain there; Charles was safe at Cromer——'

'He came to me there, and got Emma to say she wished to stay on,' interposed Charles.

'And for myself, I was led on to disclose my autumn campaign. It suited him exactly. He found each of us more accommodating than the other; and the absence of one and all has enabled him to give us the slip with the utmost ease. Now, there is nothing for it but to see if we can weather the blast——'

'We can—we must,' cried both brothers simultaneously.

'Of course, if we can do *that*, it resolves itself into a family matter. I allow I am relieved if you think we can,' owned Stephen, with whom the thought of exposure had outweighed all the rest.

It was explained to him that, so far as could be at present ascertained, apprehensions on this score might be dismissed from his mind. Macmillan had already ascertained thus much, and could speak hopefully, if not positively.

'He took all he could, Mr. Stephen, but there were things he could not touch. It was wonderful how much he did contrive to get at, though,' quoth the old man, ruefully.

'Wonderful? Why wonderful? There was not one of us here but would have trusted him with every sixpence we possessed. He was our master and instructor—eh, Charles? What was it about some little mistake you made lately?' Suddenly Stephen was back on the Highland moor and Billy Farrell, the pleasantest of companions, cheerily trudging along by his side. 'He thought you might as well extend your Cromer holiday till he had put that right,' continued Stephen, excitedly. 'Eh?'

Charles looked at Macmillan, and Macmillan back at him. Then the latter softly shook his head. 'Mr. Charles has had nothing to do with the bank affairs for a number of weeks,' said

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he. 'And I think, sir,' turning to him, 'that if I may make so bold, Mr. William often took a kind of advantage of your not being—not being so much of a business man as himself, and used to tell you that you had been doing wrong when there was nothing wrong at all. He liked to make you feel his superiority.'

'And took me in by the same trick,' said Stephen, and a muttered oath escaped. But his eye fell on the two broken-hearted brothers, and pity displaced anger.

'Thomas—Charles,' he held out a hand to each and wrung them in silence, while Macmillan turned his head aside. The poor old man was one with them in spirit.

A tap at the door, and he was instantly on the alert to prevent intrusion.

'Tell Mr. Jones to attend——'

'The gentleman says he must see one of the Mr. Farrells.'

'They are engaged. Mr. Jones will——'

'What is it?' Mr. Stephen Farrell, not unwilling to have his attention diverted, looked round. 'Anything important?' Then in the manager's ear: 'We must take care what we are about. There must be nothing to raise suspicion. I dare say they are talking outside already.'

'Shall I, then, attend to this gentleman, sir?' Macmillan took the hint. 'If you will excuse me for a moment?'

And it was but for a moment; he was back almost immediately with a deep deprecatory countenance and a card in his hand. As in duty bound, he took the card to the senior partner.

Thomas put it aside fretfully. 'Impossible; I can't see any one; I can't attend to business. He must call another time.'

'Perhaps I——' began Stephen, and mindful of appearances he glanced at the card. It might be that of an important personage, and though it was hardly to be expected that poor Tom, flabbergasted as he was, should think of this—but he started when he read the superscription, 'Mr. Lionel Colvin.'

He started and changed colour. Lionel Colvin, a persistent visitor who would not be denied admittance? Lionel, who had no account at the bank, had no business dealings with it? Lionel, the most modest, unobtrusive young fellow? What could this portend?

'You told Mr. Colvin we were engaged?'

'He said, sir, that he must see one or other of you.'

'Must? There's no "must" in the case,' frowned Thomas, with that curious wrath at a trifle we all know when the heart is

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freshly seared and bleeding. 'Must, indeed!' but he was silenced by a gesture from his cousin, who stood rapidly considering.

'We will see him,' to Macmillan. 'I have an impression that this gentleman may possibly bring us information—or at any rate that we may be able indirectly to gain information from him on the case before us. But as it is likely to be of a very private nature——'

'Shall I withdraw, sir, and send him in?'

'If you please.'

The door shut behind the old man, and Stephen turned quickly to the brothers.

'This is a new development, or I am mistaken. Be prepared. I have a conviction that we are about to hear something. When William was with us in Scotland——' but there was no time for more.

Lionel entered and faced three pairs of eyes full upon him without flinching. Beyond a bow he made no attempt at salutation.

'I am here,' he said abruptly, 'to ask, does anyone know what has become of—my sister? Yes, my sister,' repeated he, more calmly, for the simultaneous start and thrill of horror upon every countenance carried its own conviction—'my sister, gentlemen,' addressing himself more directly to Thomas and Charles Farrell, 'decoyed away by your brother.'

'No—no.' It was Thomas who cried aloud and recoiled as if he had received a blow in the face. 'Stephen—what is he saying, Stephen? Charles—Stephen—oh, my God!' A heavy groan, as the big figure swayed helplessly to and fro.

Stephen Farrell put his hand on Lionel's shoulder, and drew him to the farther end of the room.

'He's not fit to bear it,' whispered he. 'Have what mercy you can. We—Mr. Charles Farrell and—I will attend to anything—anything you have to say to us, but you can see for yourself,' glancing towards the broad back heaving tumultuously, 'that he can stand no more.'

'No more?' echoed Lionel, with a sense of dizzy wonder. 'No more, did you say? Is this then?—am I then?—I do not understand. I asked to see Mr. William Farrell,' his tone hardening.

'They ought to have told you he is not at the bank to-day.'

'They did. They asked me to wait. But I have that to say which cannot wait. Where is Mr. William Farrell?' impatience rising.

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'We should be glad to tell you if we knew ourselves,' said Stephen, quietly. 'Mr. Colvin, you have stepped behind the scenes. I do not say you had not a right to do so. I fear, I greatly fear, you had——'

'If ever man had.'

'Ah!' A long, indrawn breath.

'I have such a right,' said Lionel, between his teeth, 'that if that villain——' he was turning round, but was stayed firmly.

'Hear me one moment first, and again I implore you to have for *them* what mercy you can. They are already crushed to the earth. Mr. Colvin, we have already had bad news, appalling news. You find us here assembled at the instance of our trusted and valued bank manager—I tell you this in strict confidence, in strictest confidence—to have laid before us proofs of the unexampled treachery and infamy of our junior partner.'

'Treachery? Infamy? But I can believe it, can well believe it.'

'He has swindled, cheated, robbed us. It has been one long course of deception and fraud. Mr. Macmillan, with whom we were closeted when you came in, had his suspicions aroused at last by the magnitude of Mr. William Farrell's audacity, and summoned us at the very first moment possible, but——' and he shook his head meaningly.

'Too late?'

'Too late. He has got off. Got off with his booty. We may be able—I trust we shall be able to keep this a secret from the world, but at present it is impossible to say more. We cannot yet estimate our personal losses. One thing, however, I must beg you to understand—you are giving me your attention?—this is a matter of vital importance—that what you are now in possession of goes no farther. No one outside this door must know anything. We shall be the only sufferers; I repeat, we shall be the only sufferers. And now, my poor young friend,' with a change of tone, 'you have heard my story, tell me yours.'

'Mine is—a very short one.' Lionel Colvin was quiet now, and though a minute before ready to cry aloud to all who would hear, could scarcely find utterance for the broken syllables trembling on his lips.

Twenty-four hours had elapsed since the communication described in our last chapter had furnished to his mind sufficient evidence of the part played by Bet's quondam admirer in her disappearance, but he had been unwilling to leave the spot without

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obtaining, if possible, some corroborative testimony, or at any rate some conclusive proof of his informant's veracity.

He had got neither. All that he could learn was that a gentleman, one of many, unremarkable in any way, had stayed at the principal hotel on the previous Tuesday night and had left early; but where he had come from or where he had gone to was unknown. This much indeed had been ascertained at the very first inquiry, and further pressure elicited no more. A cunning urchin could easily invent a tale to tickle the ear, the ear being already on the stretch. It ended in its truth or falsehood mainly hanging on the testimony of a bit of silver paper.

Lionel had however resolved to delay no longer, and to avoid publicity the brother and sister had crossed to the mainland on the next morning by the very boat which had conveyed the fugitives the week before. It may be mentioned that they had not waited till now to make inquiries of the captain and crew, but no one could remember any passengers deserving of attention.

'It's no use beating about the bush longer,' he turned to Poll with burning eyes at last. 'There is only one way to get at the truth.' She was too frightened to ask him what that way was when she was left alone at an hotel and saw him hurry from the door.

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'And now, sir, you know all.'

Stephen Farrell nodded, his hand still heavily pressing the young man's shoulder.

'Can you wonder that I——?'

'I wonder at nothing.'

'You can give me no hopes, no possibility of hope?'

'I cannot. We will, of course, aid you by every means in our power,' continued Stephen, in a mechanical tone. 'On our own account we are about to—but oh, my poor boy, my poor boy——'

'Thanks . . . Don't . . . Please don't . . . You're awfully good, I—of course, I—isn't it time I went now?' He thought he was holding his hat and gloves, he thought he was speaking, and some one was answering, and the clock was striking, and what was he doing there in the parlour of Farrell's bank with three Farrell men? 'Ho there, a glass of water,' said Stephen, loudly. 'Quick, sharp. Brandy, if you've got it.'

Then some one was holding a tumbler to his lips, and he did not want it, and was trying to evade it. And why was the window open? And how cold the air blew upon his forehead!

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'He was very nearly off,' said Stephen, aside. 'I just caught him in time. Poor fellow, he was no weight, mere skin and bone. I expect he has neither eaten nor drunk since. Damn that blackguard!'

'I am afraid I am intruding.' Now Lionel was on his feet again, thinking he was speaking with dignified restraint and courtesy—he might have been drinking, so thick and guttural were his accents—'You will pardon me,' said poor Lionel, bowing.

They could never think afterwards of that travesty of stateliness without a shudder, so pitiful, so gruesome was it.

Stephen Farrell passed his hand within the young man's arm. Lionel gently eased himself of it. He wished to stand alone.

'Our carriage is in waiting;' it was Charles, the thick-head, who next put forth his little venture, 'if Mr. Colvin——?'

'No, thank you,' quickly. 'No, no.' The carriage *he* might have sat in? It was tainted, polluted. 'I appreciate your—your——' for the life of him the departing visitor could not think what it was he appreciated, but was vaguely conscious of a combined murmur in response, and of being closed in upon—barricaded, as it were; he must get out.

But he must do it properly, as a gentleman should. He must not put himself on a level with these men, and be hob-nobbing with them over their misfortune. He was sorry for them, very sorry for them—but their name was accursed in his ears.

'I think Mr. Thomas wishes to say something.' Stephen had withdrawn the brothers for a moment, and the three heads had met. ('There can't be a doubt of it; he has abducted the Colvin girl, the eldest. Of course, he couldn't marry her, as we thought he was going to do. The other business explains all that. She'd have had him up for bigamy on the nail; though I dare say she gave him rope enough as long as he kept clear of that. Thomas, you must say a word—say what you can,' and the speaker, Stephen, led Thomas back.)

Thomas was tottering like an old man, and what to say he knew not. His own bewildering grief well-nigh stupefied him, and Lionel looked formidable, unapproachable. 'May God help us both, sir—may God help us both!' he quavered.

'Well, perhaps it did as well as anything else,' reflected Stephen, patronisingly.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

'THIS IS THE END.'

LIONEL had now another errand to perform, and the same afternoon saw him on his way to King's Beacon.

If anything could have added to his present wretchedness it was the sight of the scenes so lately traversed under such different auspices, for by this very train he and Georgie had travelled down, and all was so like outwardly, so changed inwardly. It was one long mockery and torture.

The same cheerful guard accosted him; he had chatted with the man on the former occasion. This day was bright as that had been; he had noted this and that pleasant scene in its autumn colouring—the tints were still gayer now. There was the pretty hamlet with its ivied church, and the school-children at play on the common; there the canal with its plodding boat, the blue smoke ascending from its funnel, the bargemen grouping over their tea. There was the lock with its small white cottage, and the lock-keeper's wife taking in her clothes from the drying-line. There was the ploughboy on the long brown sloping field to the right, and the horses pausing ere they turned, while John Ploughman wiped his brow and took breath, looking up at the passing train. Even the rooks that flew and fluttered over the furrows were the same rooks to which Georgie had called his attention.

What had she said about them? He could not remember.

Georgie had prattled most of the way, breaking out into little joyous comments and ejaculations about nothing; and he had thought her an excellent companion, and been ready to look and listen, and give his opinion gravely on the most trivial and comical of frivolities.

He had agreed with her that a journey was wasted if one did not look about and see things; it was stupid to be buried in a book. True, he was a reader and she was not, but he smiled to himself as she spoke; her thoughts could have been more easily diverted into another channel than his at the moment.

Had he been selfish in his happiness? Perhaps. It was no use thinking about that now. Was he to blame for—for anything? This was quite possible; he was a dull fellow and an easy victim.

But what he had now to do needed no wits, and he supposed he should go through with it all right. His return ticket

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was in his pocket; he must have been quite clear in his mind, quite acute and provident when taking it. He kept repeating to himself the hour at which the return train started. It would unfortunately interfere with the dinner hour at King's Beacon, but Lady Blanche was so kind she would—would not—what would she? He could not imagine what it was that Lady Blanche would, or would not do.

Of course he would not make a fool of himself. What he had to say must be said in so many words, but he had already got them by heart, and there would be no possibility of their meaning being mistaken.

How long would Georgie take to get ready? He could give her an hour; more than an hour in reality, but he would say an hour. It would be better for all concerned. He would probably not see Leonora after—after his interview.

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It was four o'clock when the train drew up at a small wayside station which Lionel recognised as the one preceding his own stopping-place, and the compartment emptied itself of all his fellow-travellers at this point.

He was mechanically assisting them to dismount, as indifferent to their departure as to their places being refilled, when, with a start, indifference vanished, for it was Lord Umfreville who brushed past, and hastily ensconced himself in the opposite corner.

That he did not perceive his nephew was obvious, and the latter's first impulse was to pass out before the door shut, and find an asylum elsewhere for the remaining half-hour of his journey. He had actually risen to do so, when a second thought made him resume his seat. It was necessary that he should meet Lord Umfreville.

'Hollo? *You?*' The tone was precisely what might have been expected, also the frown which accompanied it.

Lionel looked his relative in the face. 'How are you?'

To his own surprise he spoke with the utmost politeness.

'So you are back here again? Thought you had left these parts,' growled his lordship. 'Going to King's Beacon, I suppose? Haven't they had enough of you at King's Beacon yet? That young cub told me you left about a week ago, but I suppose you couldn't keep away. Where ladies are concerned——'

Lionel left his place, and seated himself opposite the speaker.

'My dear uncle' ('What on earth?' muttered the uncle, for the accents fell like milk and honey on his ear, and withal had a

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strange artificiality about them.) 'will you kindly give me a few moments of your time, and may I ask you to dismiss from your mind all thoughts of King's Beacon and its inmates? Although I am going to King's Beacon, the business which takes me there has nothing to do with them, and we need not bring their names into this conversation.'

'Need not bring their names into this conversation?' mimicking. 'Oh, very well—very well, I'm sure. It is to be a "conversation," is it? You'll excuse my saying so, but you and I do not as a rule do much in the conversation line, so I am sure I am most happy if it pleases you—only one thing before you begin,' with a hasty thought; 'if it's anything you are going to ask of me, Lionel, you may save your breath. If it's money, I'm a poor man, poorer than you—for my position. If it's influence, I haven't got what would cover a threepenny bit. If it's——'

'I am not going to ask anything of you, uncle.'

Uncle? The last word nipped the retort on the sarcastic lips; instead Lord Umfreville, muttering something about 'young relatives' and the 'head of the house always expected to provide for them,' pulled up his collar and eyed his nephew a shade more civilly.

The civility and the hostility were alike thrown away. A mortal wound makes a man indifferent to prick or salve.

'Well?' A trifle of curiosity moved the speaker at last. 'It does not seem to me we shall have much time for our "conversation," nephew,' observed he, drily, 'if we take so long to start it. We are spinning along——'

'I know,' Lionel held up his hand. 'But I think,' said he, slowly, 'that when you hear what I have to tell, you will excuse a momentary reluctance. Sir, my mother was your sister. You cast her off, did you not? I have gathered so, though I never asked nor wish to know why. I ask now; you need not be afraid to tell me.'

'Is that all?' a low laugh. Then the lips remained parted; for a moment the family skeleton fancied he was about to have the door shut in his face, but he was mistaken. 'Since you *ask* me,' said Lord Umfreville with emphasis; 'and I presume you wish for the truth in reply, your mother disgraced her family both before her marriage and after it. She was a notorious——'

'I understand.'

'Mind, I shouldn't have told you. There's no need to rake up old stories. A woman who puts her family to shame ought never

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to be named among them, and the only thing for you and your sisters to do is to forget that she ever lived, if you can. Even if she had lived, she would have been, or she ought to have been dead to you. There! I'm sorry to say it,' shortly—not unkindly.

'There is,' said Lionel, speaking as if in a dream, 'a new member of the family whose name must never be mentioned henceforth. Sir, I have got to tell it—you have got to hear it. Had I not met you now, I should have forced myself to your door to gain a hearing. My sister is—my mother's daughter.'

He rose and threw open the window.

It seemed to him that some one was speaking, swearing, moving about behind him, but he would not turn until he had a full command of himself. Then 'If this could have been concealed,' said he between his teeth, while abruptly regaining his seat, 'you can believe you would have been just the last to hear it. If there had been any hope, any chance——'

'Which is it?' abruptly. 'The one here?' jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

'No.'

'The one Lady Blanche raves about—the beauty?'

'Yes.'

Lord Umfreville drew a long breath and sat silent. It was the one tribute he could pay to the agony upon the brow before him.

Suddenly he ejaculated 'Lionel.'

Lionel nodded.

'I'm not a fellow of much feeling,' said Lord Umfreville, very truly, 'but there *are* things. I was just your age, Lionel, when *she* did it. I don't know how I felt then. I think'—a furtive glance—'I know now. You won't care, perhaps, for my sympathy, but such as it is you have it.' He waited another minute, then burst forth—'Tell me what you please, and as much as you please. You've no father; p'raps I might have thought of that sometimes; I'm the nearest relative you have in the world, and if you like to remember me *as* that, I'll not forget it on my part. You were right to say I ought to know; of course I ought to know. Blood is blood, and it's from us she's got hers, curse her——'

Lionel started forward. A hand was laid on his knee.

'I ask your forgiveness,' said Lord Umfreville, humbly. 'Before God, Lionel, I will not say that again. And it was not *your* sister but *mine* I was thinking of. These women, they bring us low, and then expect us to go through the world sim-

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pering and smirking like themselves. Not one of them but would——'

'Uncle, I beg you, I entreat you——'

'You are right, Lionel. Sir, you bear it like a man. Allow me to say that you bear it as a man of our family should. The men among us were straight—fairly straight; not worse than others, at any rate; and if our women—— But I'll hold my tongue. Yes, sir, out of respect to *you*, I'll hold my tongue.' Drawing nearer he lowered his voice: 'Tell me about it, Lionel.'

By the time the train began to slow down next, all had been told.

'And you are returning to-night?' said Lord Umfreville, thoughtfully. 'Of course. It is the only thing you can do. You could not stay there.' ('The scoundrel has spoilt your chances in that quarter,' to himself.) 'The only thing would be—— Look here, why not come to Ughtred? Now, my dear fellow,' proceeded he, in persuasive accents, 'let us look at this matter from the same point of view, as a family matter—a purely family matter. From under my roof, the roof of your ancestors, you and yours could present to the world a fair front——'

'We have no right to present a fair front.'

'We have no need to lie down and be kicked. We can at least hang together. Oh, you are thinking if we had hung together in the past this blackguardly trick might never have been played? Quite so. I won't say that you have not cause for the reproach. The poor thing was at the mercy of—but there are the others to be thought of. Bring them with you to Ughtred, and let us at least show—— What, you won't?' for he read resolution in the mournful negative. 'Well,' after a pause, 'I won't press it. Not at present. But if the time should come when you need some one to stand by you—some one of the name—myself——'

'Thank you, uncle.'

'He'll never do it, though,' muttered the uncle, looking after him.

Presently he drove past Lionel on foot. Should he, or should he not, offer a lift? It would be out of his way, but, moved by an unusual impulse, he was about to draw up, when he suddenly flung himself into his seat again. He perceived that the walk was undertaken from choice, not from necessity. It was, in short, a breathing space.

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'But still they might have written—I do think they might have written,' wailed poor Georgie, who had dragged through the weary day, waiting for the afternoon post. 'They never missed before; and even if there is nothing to say, it's better to know there *is* nothing. Oh, Lady Blanche, do you think—do you think there is any hope?'

'I think, dear Georgie, there may be some—change.'

Lady Blanche hesitated a little. She, too, had been surprised at receiving no tidings of any sort from Freshwater that day. In her own mind she apprehended their worst fears realised and the lifeless remains found.

'If they don't write to-morrow,' sobbed poor Georgie (she did not notice that Leonora had come near, quickly touched her aunt and whispered to her), 'what shall we do if they don't write to-morrow?'

('Yes, get her away quickly,' replied Lady Blanche, aside.)

'It is not very kind of Lionel,' continued the poor girl, sinking to a fretful intonation; 'it's so hard not to know anything——'

'Georgie, dear,' interposed Leonora's soft voice, 'some one—some visitor—is coming up to the door; shall you and I escape?'

An arm was round her and she was being carried off ere she knew; and it did not occur to her that visitors had not been admitted during the past week, and would certainly not be shown up straight into Lady Blanche's presence now.

Lady Blanche put her hands before her eyes while awaiting this one. She felt all that Leonora's whisper meant. Lionel was at the door? Without a hint of warning. Come himself rather than send the sad news by letter, no doubt; come to break it to his poor young sister and to them all. She must be prepared not to add to his grief by her own. She must be composed. She drew a little shawl around her, and folded her arms within it. Hark! He was at the door.

'Dear Lionel, I am afraid this bodes no good! We saw you coming. I sent the girls away——'

She drew him forward, both hands in hers.

'Oh, did you?' said he. 'Yes, I—I understand. But I have not long to wait. How soon can she be ready?'

'My dear Lionel, what are you talking about?' uneasily. Was he—was he not quite himself?

'The train goes at seven forty-five, Lady Blanche. Perhaps, as time presses, Georgie had better be told.'

'But you must first tell me,' said Lady Blanche, with gentle

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persistence. 'Oh, my poor boy, my poor boy, I fear I know what you have to tell!'

'You know?' His voice was still thick, almost inarticulate. 'You know?'

'You have found her, Lionel?' tremulously.

A spasm passed over his face.

'Would to God I had!'

Lady Blanche was silent. What, then, could it be?

'You did not see the words of the telegram which summoned me from here,' said he, suddenly straightening himself and calling to mind his part, for he had thought out this opening carefully; 'they were "Bet is lost." I can only repeat them now.'

'Lionel!—But I do not understand,' faintly.

He perceived nevertheless that he had struck the first blow, and, without giving himself time to think, recapitulated his lesson rapidly, gathering force and lucidity as he proceeded.

And now for an outburst, a cry of horror and reprobation. He was ready for it.

'The poor, innocent babe,' murmured Lady Blanche, sinking into a chair. 'Oh, my poor, darling, innocent Bet——'

'Not "innocent,"' interrupted he, sternly.

'What?' she was on her feet in a moment. 'What? You? Her brother, her own and only brother? You? Your father's son? For shame, for shame! I say the child *is* innocent. I say she is as pure as I am—oh, my Bet, my little Bet, why did I not see? Fool that I was and blind! I might have shielded you—oh, Lionel, why—*why* was I not told? But this is no time for blame; only I say before God, and I will say before all the world, that child never knew what she was doing.'

His eyes were slowly enlarging. 'You believe this?'

'Do you dare to disbelieve it? Again I say "For shame," Lionel. Have I to teach you to think of a true, trustful—alas! too trustful, nature? I tell you the child never dreamt of evil; it was not in her. She has been beguiled by falsehood—who can tell how plausibly devised? Anything would do. He had captured her affections, and Bet is one who gives wholly when she gives at all. From the message left for Poll,' proceeded Lady Blanche, not allowing a response, 'it seems to me absolutely certain that Bet had no thought of harm befalling her. She expected to clear up the mystery of her departure within a few hours. Does that point to guilt? Of course she thought she was going to marry him, and how do we know that she has not?—yes, I see what you

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would say,' correcting herself, 'in this case word would have come; but there is an explanation of this: he dares not let her send it for fear of betraying his whereabouts to his defrauded brothers. Sad as it is to have to hope for such a thing, dear Lionel, our darling is, I doubt not, this man's wife——'

'Oh, Lady Blanche, if I could but hope it!'

'Can you not?'

'I can't. I will tell you all. It may be as you say—it *may* be—but when I went to the bank this morning, and spoke there of a clandestine and disgraceful marriage as what I believed to have taken place—it seemed a terrible thing enough to have a sister cast in her lot with that of a scoundrel flying from justice,' his hands clenched the support on which he leaned, 'the brothers—the partners—maintained an ominous silence; they were keeping something back from me. They knew, by some means or other, I feel convinced they knew that there had been no—contemplation of—marriage.'

'Still I say that Bet is innocent,' but her cheek whitened perceptibly. 'Whatever has befallen your sister, your own sister, your own little fatherless and motherless sister——'

'Lady Blanche, have pity.'

She turned her face from him and he his from her.

'Is nothing to be done?' she whispered, at last.

'*They* are doing what they can. They will not prosecute, but it is a matter of the first importance that the defaulter should be found and induced to give certain information. That done, they will let him go, stipulating that he never sets foot in this country again. So much I learned this morning.'

There was a long pause, and Lady Blanche knew what was coming.

'I have one word more to say,' said Lionel, in an altered tone. 'Thank you, may God bless you for all your great goodness to me—I am not now speaking for any one but myself—in the past. Already everything connected with my happiness in this house has resolved itself into "the past." Lady Blanche, you do not, you cannot misunderstand me; nor will—she? The shame that has befallen our house——' his voice died away, and again he turned his head aside.

Lady Blanche crept to his elbow. 'Dear Lionel—dear Lionel'—the tears were streaming over her cheeks—'I will tell Leonora.'

He grasped her hand. 'May she know,' he muttered brokenly, 'just this, that I did—once—love her?'

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'Did once?' A fragment of a gleam upon the speaker's brow. 'Oh, if she were my child, this should never separate you. What have *you* done? And why should your happiness and hers be blighted? But my charge is a sacred one; I must not, I dare not permit my own feelings——'

'To stand in the way of your duty,' said Lionel, steadily. 'Believe me, Lady Blanche, I never for a moment expected anything else; I should not,' he drew himself up proudly, 'have presumed upon anything else. I should not have asked of you the favour I did just now, only that we had better not meet again——'

'Yes, perhaps,' said she, faintly.

'And so, if she may——?'

'I will tell her. Dear Lionel, it breaks my heart to tell her, but there are—her people; she is, as you know, only a cousin's child, and was entrusted to me because it was felt that I should discharge my trust faithfully and honourably. It is terrible to have to say it, but, had her parents been living, they might not feel as I do about this. They were strict in their notions——'

'As I am,' said he. 'It humbles me that you should think this explanation necessary. Surely you did not suppose——'

'Nothing. It was to myself I spoke. I have to keep down my rebellious longings. Oh, Lionel, I had so hoped, so hoped—you know what your father was to me?' she cried in a passion of the moment.

He bent his head.

'His son should have been as my son. It was a new life opening before me—selfish creature that I am to recall this at such a moment to wound you——'

'No, it heals me; I am glad to know it, glad to think it. But we ought to hurry now,' he looked at his watch. 'Can Georgie come, and her things follow her? I have left Poll alone at a London hotel; she has had a miserable time, and I should not have left her there if I had known anything else to do with her; but I promised we should join her to-night. Besides——' he paused, and she understood what the pause meant, 'this is the end,' he said, and looked towards the door.

It opened as he spoke.

'No, no,' said Lady Blanche, hastily moving forward to prevent intrusion; 'I am engaged, let no one in,' as a footman appeared in the doorway with a card on a salver, 'go and say so,

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Thomas; and, Thomas, the carriage—a close carriage—at once, to go to the station. At once,' peremptorily.

'My lady, the gentleman desired——'

'Do as I tell you.' But mechanically she took the card and looked at it. '"Mr. Sydney Umfreville"—oh, another time, but I am engaged to-day——'

'The gentleman asked for Mr. Colvin, my lady.'

'For Mr. Colvin? How did he know Mr. Colvin was here? But it does not signify; you would not?' turning to Lionel, 'of course not. Mr. Colvin is on the point of leaving, and has no time.' Aside to him: 'Kindly meant perhaps, but——'

'The gentleman was very particular, my lady; said he knew Mr. Colvin was pressed for time, but I was to say——'

'Who is it?' said Lionel, coming forward.

'Your cousin,' said Lady Blanche, in a lower voice; 'your uncle must have told him,' for she had heard of the meeting, 'and he wishes to show sympathy——'

'Said he *must* see Mr. Colvin.' Stolid Thomas held to his point, having been pecuniarily impressed. 'The gentleman is in the library, sir.'

With a look at Lady Blanche, which she interpreted as one of resignation to the inevitable, Lionel stepped into the passage. 'Let me be told as soon as the carriage is there,' he directed the servant as he passed along, indifferent to anything which might now befall him. The visit might be ill-timed, but of its good intention there could be no doubt, and he schooled himself to behave decently.

'I say, I think I've got some good news for you.'

So unexpected was the greeting which awaited our unfortunate young man that he stood absolutely still, and confronted the speaker with dazed eyes and twitching lip. 'I'm awfully sorry, you know, and all that; but I do believe I know something that will help a bit,' eagerly. 'I came off the moment I heard. You're listening, aren't you? You know who I am, don't you? We haven't met for ages, but I'm your cousin Sydney, and I'm stopping at Ughtred——'

'Yes.'

'You know? Well, look here, Lionel; I shouldn't have thought of bothering you, if I hadn't been absolutely sure that I have good news. Can you understand?' ('Poor fellow!' under his breath.)

'Very kind,' muttered Lionel, mechanically.

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'You can't take it in? But listen. I was in Liverpool a week ago—this day week—last Wednesday—the day your—your—the day the *Majestic* sailed for New York. I saw them—*them*, you know—and she's not gone with him—she's—not—gone with him,' breathlessly.

'*What?*' There was no question of inattention or lack of comprehension now. He was keen as a panther on the track. He shook from head to foot. 'Say that again; for God's sake, say that again!' he cried hoarsely, the drops starting on his brow.

'I'll say it, and swear to it. Of course I knew nothing at the time, but I was on the platform of the wharfside station when the special came in. I had noticed a fellow standing about, because for some time we were the only two there, and he engaged a cab and paid the man beforehand, saying he would want him to do his fastest, so as to go somewhere and be back before the *Majestic* sailed. Cabby seemed impressed and looked into his hand. I thought something was up. Well, I lost sight of the other fellow in the crowd when the train came in, and forgot all about it; but as the passengers moved off and the platform cleared, I came upon him with *two* girls all tied up together, and one of them talking very fast. Lionel, the other was—your sister.'

('That was what they knew at the bank,' thought Lionel.) He could not speak, could merely breathe and nod assent.

'There was evidently something going on,' proceeded his cousin, 'some difference of opinion. The bearded fellow——'

'He was bearded?—Ah!'

'He made a snatch at the little one, and the tall one whirled her round as if to keep her from him. She did this more than once, talking all the time. I thought he was trying to say "Good-bye" and that she was preventing him. Once I saw her shake her hand in his face and point to it. She had on a lot of rings. I said to myself, "It's the wedding-ring she's pointing to." Of course I couldn't hear what she said, but she looked a Tartar.' He paused, recollecting. 'When the platform was free from everyone else, those three were still there. Even the station porters were grinning and nudging, and they were told to go on board. Two of them went, the third was left behind.'

'They—stop—say that again, will you?'

'She was left behind upon the platform—at the instance of the woman, I should say. At any rate, the man seemed most reluctant and was driven off by her. She made him go in front. I had the curiosity to follow, and saw them on board. My own people were

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not interesting, and, to tell the truth, I was rather shirking them, having done all that was required of me in that quarter; and having once begun to take an interest in the other affair, it grew more and more interesting. I should say that before I followed the departing couple, I took one or two good looks at the little girl in the brown cloak who was being rather heartlessly abandoned, as it seemed to me, after the parting. Everyone noticed her. Directly the *Majestic* was off, I was asked if she had anything to do with me—I suppose, because I was walking about near—and I was told to go to her if she had. Then we, I and the man who was talking to me, heard a cry—or a scream—or something of that sort, and we seemed to know whom it came from, and ran back, but she was not to be seen anywhere.'

Lionel drew a long breath.

'If I could hope it was Bet!'

'Listen, you have not heard the end; a small bag was lying upon the platform; she had let it fall, or the man had, for I believe I saw it in his hand, and I myself picked this up and took it to the cloakroom. By calling for it there, you can satisfy yourself. The initials on the bag were "E. C."'

'The carriage is at the door, sir.'

It was Thomas who now appeared, well pleased with himself, and feeling that he had earned his sovereign.

'All right,' said Mr. Umfreville, dismissing him. 'Is my thing there, too?' he stepped to the door to call the above after the retreating figure.

When he turned, he felt ashamed to be where he was. For there was a sound in the room which is perhaps as sad a sound as can be heard by human ears, the sound of a man's crying. Lionel had flung himself across a table, and buried his head in his arms. After one look at him his cousin turned away, and, following a second impulse, as silently left the house.

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(*To be concluded.*)

ASTOR, LENOX AND
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The Capture of Capetown

WITH EXTRACTS FROM AN UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT BY SIR JOHN MALCOLM.

'HISTORY repeats itself'—more especially in South Africa. That is the text upon which an instructive sermon might be preached by the aid of the old manuscript which lies before me—a faded, stained, and tattered manuscript, dated 1795, and endorsed in a trembling hand, 'Account of Cape Colony, by my son John.' 'Son John' was no less a person than Sir John Malcolm, soldier, diplomatist, and administrator, the biographer of Clive, the political historian of India, and, proudest title of all, 'Lord Wellesley's factotum at Calcutta.' His manuscript is written in a fine, copper-plate hand, and the style is admirably terse and lucid, but the spelling is somewhat erratic even for that tolerant period the eighteenth century. This little weakness may be accounted for by the fact that the writer began his military career at the early age of twelve, without previously passing any competitive examination.

The fourth son of George Malcolm of Burnfoot, Dumfriesshire, John was born in 1769. His father, having a patriarchal family of ten sons and seven daughters to provide for, tried to improve his fortunes by speculation, and ended—the story is a familiar one—by losing all he possessed. When the crash came helping hands were held out by friends of the family, and berths were found for several of the elder boys. A nomination to a cadetship in the East India Company's service was offered to John, then not quite twelve years old. It was feared that he was too young to be accepted by the authorities. However, he was taken to the India House, and was in a fair way to be rejected on account of his age and size, when one of the directors asked, 'Why, my little man, what would *you* do if you were to meet Hyder Ali?' 'Cut aff his heid,' was the laconic reply. The little Scotchman's language

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was so much taller than himself that it won his case. 'You'll do,' said the director. 'Let him pass.'

After twelve years' service at Madras young Malcolm was invalided home in 1794. In the spring of the following year he was appointed aide-de-camp to General Alured Clarke, and on May 17 sailed with his chief for the East. Their ship formed part of a considerable squadron of East Indiamen which sailed with sealed orders; and it was an open secret that the troops on board were likely to have the monotony of the long sea-voyage varied in a rather unusual manner. The squadron anchored in Simon's Bay on September 4, having made a rapid passage out; and the manuscript above described opens abruptly with an account of the landing of the troops and military stores. Even in these days every reader is not perfectly familiar with the history of South Africa, therefore it may be as well briefly to recapitulate the circumstances that led to our attack upon Capetown at a time when we were supposed to be the friends and allies of the Dutch. On February 1, 1793, France had declared war against England and the Netherlands. A French army at once advanced to the Dutch frontier, and a considerable English force under the Duke of York was despatched to assist our friend the Stadtholder. From the first, things went badly for the Netherlands, and it was feared that the French would next attack the Dutch dependencies, of which Cape Colony was in the most defenceless position. The nominal Governor, Van der Graafe, had been recalled, and the Commissioner-General, Abraham Sluysken, was practically at the head of affairs. At this time the burghers were deeply incensed against the Government on account of the existing system of imposts and monopolies; the Dutch East India Company was insolvent; an incessant war was being waged with the Bushmen on the frontiers; and the small garrison of Capetown was chiefly composed of foreign mercenaries, who could only be depended upon to support the party which offered the best pay.

It was clear that the Colony could not defend itself; and at first Great Britain turned a deaf ear to all appeals for help. However, the series of disasters in the Netherlands, the overthrow of the Stadtholder's government, and the report that the South African burghers were inclined to change sides and join the French, induced England to send out a small expedition under Admiral Sir George Elphinstone (afterwards Lord Keith) and General Craig in the early part of 1795. Upon their arrival in Simon's Bay in June, the commanders wrote to the Council of

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Cape Colony, stating that they had brought a mandate signed by the Prince of Orange, then a fugitive in England, ordering the Governor to admit British troops into the fort, and to consider them as the forces of a friendly Power sent to protect the Colony against the French until such time as it would be possible to restore it to its lawful owner. The Council found themselves placed in an awkward dilemma. They knew that the mandate had no official force, having been signed by the Prince alone, who was a fugitive in a foreign country. No newspapers had reached them for several months, and they knew nothing of what had been happening in the mother-country except what the English chose to tell them—namely, that the Netherlands had fallen into the hands of the French without terms of capitulation. The commanders suppressed the facts that the democratic party had given the French an enthusiastic welcome, and that the national government had been remodelled.

In the circumstances the Council felt that the best thing they could do was to temporise. They offered to supply provisions to the English fleet as long as it remained in the bay, and promised to ask for help should they be attacked by the French. A little later, in spite of the strict blockade kept by the British, a Dutch ship got in with newspapers containing a notice issued by the States-General, absolving all persons in the Netherlands and their dependencies from their oath of allegiance to the Prince of Orange, and stating that the Stadtholderate had been abolished and an independent republic established. On receipt of this news the Council decided that it was their obvious duty to prevent the English from obtaining possession, temporary or otherwise, of the Colony. Early in August, a British picket having been fired upon near Simonstown, hostilities began. The Dutch camp at Muizenberg on the road to Capetown was bombarded and captured, the burghers falling back upon Wyndberg. Craig, having only sixteen hundred men and not a single field-gun, was too weak to advance upon Capetown, and his position at Muizenberg was for a short period extremely critical. However, in the nick of time thirteen East Indiamen sailed into the bay, bringing three thousand troops under the command of General Clarke. On September 9 the Council were warned that unless they surrendered their town in accordance with the favourable terms already offered, possession would be taken by violent means. To this ultimatum Sluysken replied that his oath required him to defend the Colony for its lawful owner.

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John Malcolm's manuscript begins, as has been said, with an account of the arrival of the squadron in Simon's Bay on September 4. Three-fourths of it have not appeared in print before, but the first few pages were quoted by Kaye in his *Life of Sir John Malcolm* (1856), and may therefore be briefly summarised. The troops were rapidly landed, and marched to Muizenberg, where they were anxiously awaited by Craig's little force, who had lost all hopes of succeeding without these reinforcements. The chief difficulty was the transport of provisions to camp, these having to be carried from the boats on the soldiers' backs. Thanks chiefly to the zeal and decision of the admiral, the force was enabled to march on Capetown on September 14, taking with them four days' provisions, and leaving eight days' provisions at Muizenberg. The army consisted of five thousand men, made up of infantry, artillery, bluejackets, and marines, and having twelve six-pounders and two howitzers. They had not advanced more than five hundred yards before they were harassed by small parties of burghers, mounted on active little horses, and carrying with them a long gun, presumably an eighteenth-century Long Tom. 'They appeared to have no Discipline,' says Malcolm, whose orthography I have not ventured to correct, 'and any person who had seen irregular Cavalry must have instantly supposed them to be a very contemptible enemy. These Burghers were the farmers of the Country, who were by far the most violent party against any terms being entered into with us. Unaccustomed to fire at anything but Roebucks and Ostriches till our arrival, they were eager to try their hands at new Game, as they used scoffingly to term our Troops. They had mett with petty successes against the advanced party of General Craig's little army, whose prudent conduct in not advancing against Capetown till General Clarke's arrival, they readily construed into a fear of their Prowess.'

Although the ground was particularly favourable for their methods of warfare, being studded with sandhills and intersected with deep lagoons, the burghers were intimidated by the steady advance of the British, and fled from height to height, keeping up an irregular fire, seldom nearer than a quarter of a mile. The ground presently opened out into a level plain, and across this the enemy fell back upon the little Wyndberg, where a party of infantry with nine field-pieces had taken up a strong position. The high road ran through the centre of their line, though it would have been possible, as Malcolm afterwards discovered, to

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have found 'a way round' out of reach of their cannon. The British halted in the plain for their second column under Colonel Campbell, which had been much detained for want of proper guides, but at 4 P.M. the combined attack began. One detachment of eight hundred was ordered to turn the enemy's left flank, and one of six hundred to turn their right, while the remainder advanced to attack in front. Confused by the well-directed fire of the British gunners, and alarmed by the appearance of the parties upon their flanks, the burghers very soon abandoned their position, but, '*having excellent Cattle, they easily drew off their Guns.*' Does not this read like a quotation from yesterday's paper?

As it was now dark a halt was called, and the men were ordered to lie on their arms till morning. 'The Casualities of the day had been very triffling,' says Malcolm, 'particularly considering the great noise that had been made, one man killed, and about twenty wownded.' Evidently, then as now, the bark of the Boer guns was much worse than their bite. The fugitives took the news of their defeat into Capetown, and at ten o'clock the same night a flag came from Governor Sluysken, and a truce of forty-eight hours was requested. One of twenty-four hours was granted, and next morning General Craig met the commissioners halfway between the town and the camp, when the terms of capitulation were agreed upon, and the fort taken possession of in the name of his Britannic Majesty. The burghers apparently objected as strongly to street fighting and the accompanying destruction of property as do their descendants at the present day, the capitulation of Capetown being as sudden and complete as that of Johannesburg or Pretoria. There were, however, divided councils in the enemy's camp. The Scotch commander-in-chief of the Dutch army, Colonel Gordon, was supposed to be in favour of a British occupation, while Van Baalen, who had been in command the previous day at Wyndberg, was alleged to have drawn up his forces in such a faulty position that they were practically certain of defeat. The burghers, declaring that they were betrayed and sold, dispersed and returned to their farms, thus rendering any further defence of the Colony impossible, whatever the intentions of the Government may have been. The terms of capitulation provided for the surrender of the Dutch troops as prisoners of war, while the colonists were to retain all their existing rights, including the existing form of religion. Everything belonging to the East India Company was to be

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handed over to the British commanders, but otherwise all property was to be respected.

Malcolm declares that nothing could have been more fortunate than the termination of this affair, since 'had the original terms offered by Sir G. Elphinstone and General Craig been accepted, our Commanders would have been tied down to the invidious task of supporting a system of Government deservedly odious to all classes, and the divided authority of the civil Government under the Prince of Orange, and the Military under his Brittannick Majesty would have proved a continual source of Discord, Jealousy, and Recrimination.' The writer expresses his satisfaction that the Dutch had not, by an infatuated resistance, obliged the English to attack the town, since in that case the consequences would have been dreadful. 'Our Success would have been certain, and no power could have restrained an army composed like ours of wild Sailors, and raw (I may almost say undisciplined) Soldiers from Carnage and plunder.' As soon as he was in possession of the town, General Clarke, who appears to have been the 'Bobs' of his own day, began to try by every means in his power to quiet the minds of the inhabitants, conciliate their affections, and reconcile them to the change of government. His efforts met with apparent success, for in a few days order was restored, the women who had fled to the country at the beginning of hostilities returned, and 'even the most violent Burghers, allured by the prospect of gain, began to bring in their Cattle. Every man followed his former occupation, and a Stranger would not have believed any change had happened.'

Kaye quoted no further from the manuscript account than the foregoing passage in his *Life of Sir John Malcolm*, and all further extracts are now printed for the first time. 'The Commanders,' proceeds the writer, 'not chusing to place any Confidence in the affection and Loyalty of our new subjects, who had almost all taken the oath of allegiance to the King of Great Britain, very wisely determined to leave all the Regiments in Garrison at the Cape, and to abandon all thoughts of prosecuting the Expedition any farther. The whole of the Military did not amount to more than three thousand effective men, a force hardly sufficient to defend the Cape against a French Invasion, on the Supposition that the Inhabitants were well-inclined, which there was good reason to suspect they were not, particularly those in the Country where French principles had made wide progress; but of this hereafter. The money in the Treasury was very

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triffling. Military stores and Cannon in great abundance, and stores of Corn to an immence amount were found, and many other articles of value.'

Malcolm observes that no occurrence worthy of mention happened during his two months' stay at the Cape, except the tragic death of Colonel Gordon. 'That officer was the son of General Gordon of the Scotch Brigade in the Dutch service, an officer well known in Europe. The Colonel was appointed Commander-in-chief of the Dutch Troops at the Cape twenty years ago, and had a Regiment of his own who chiefly composed the Garrison of that place. His attachment to the English nation was strong and avowed, and whether from his public character or from private correspondence I know not, thus far is certain, great hopes were formed of his either publicly or privately aiding us in getting possession of the Cape for the Stadtholder, whose part it was imagined he would take against the Republic. This hope proved ill-founded, yet he was not free of the suspicion of being well-inclined towards us, particularly among the lower classes, and in his own Regiment. His supineness during the period that Hostilities were actually carrying on, when he certainly neglected all his official duties, and his having recommended the acceptance of the first offers of Sir George and General Craig, rendered him still more suspected. These circumstances occasioned his being very grossly insulted by the men of his own Regiment the day they lay down their arms. On the morning of the 25th of October he put an end to his existence with a pistol, being no longer able to endure the disgrace he conceived he had fallen into with both parties.

'Colonel Gordon was a man remarkable for his humanity and Philanthropy. He was a Traveler, an Antiquarian and a natural Philosopher. Botany was latterly his favourite study. He travelled farther inland from the Cape than any European had ever done. As he committed his observations on every subject to paper, his MSS., which are in his Widow's possession, are probably valuable. His wavering conduct at a period when, whatever party he had chosen, he ought to have acted with resolution, may be deem'd the original cause of his unfortunate end. He had long deservedly held the first and most respectable rank in the society in which he lived. He thought he was degraded, and could not support the reflection. I have also heard that the stream of his Domestic Joys was poisoned. If so, it is not to be wondered at that a mind, whose powers were weakened by illness,

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should fall under such accummulated misfortunes. He was buried privately, but his Corps was attended to the Grave by near forty English officers.' Theal, in his *History of South Africa*, states that Colonel Gordon was so bitterly disappointed at finding that the government was to be carried on in the name of the King of England, without reference to the Prince of Orange, that he died by his own hand.

Malcolm gives an interesting summary of his observations on the climate, soil, productions, and inhabitants of the Cape. In his day, as in ours, the climate was healthy, the summers oppressively hot, and the soil sandy. 'I was informed,' he remarks, 'by a Gentleman who went upwards of one hundred miles inland that after he had travelled one day's Journey, nothing new met his eye, as a general sameness prevailed. The Plantations were in common eleven or twelve miles from each other, and the intermediate space was a Barren Waste.' There is no mention of the mineral treasures, gold mines and diamond mines, with which the name of South Africa is now so inseparably connected. At that time the only portions of the country explored by Europeans were, besides Cape Colony, the western coast belt as far north as Wallfisch Bay, the eastern coast belt to the Zambesi valley, and a few localities along the eastern border of the territory now known as Rhodesia. Western Rhodesia, Basutoland, and the country now included in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colonies were entirely unknown.

Malcolm was especially struck with the excellence of the Cape vines, and with the variety and profusion of the flowers. 'On the side of one of their Bleak Mountains,' he writes, 'you may cull a Nosegay superior in the Scent and Beauty of its flowers to one selected from every Garden in England. The profusion with which the hand of Nature has scattered them, apparently in the most ungenial situations, prevents the Inhabitants from attending to them so much in Gardens, as they might be disposed to do were they more rare.' Capetown he describes as the cleanest and most regularly well-built town he has ever seen, affirming that there is not a mean house in it. 'The number of Dutch Inhabitants at the Colony,' he continues, 'may be computed, men, women and children, at 8,000—of slaves of different descriptions, 20,000. Few of the Inhabitants are very wealthy; most of them are comfortable. They partake of course of the character of the Country from which they are derived. The men are rather heavy, but in general good-humoured and friendly.

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Few of them are remarkable for their abilities, and few are very ignorant. They appear unambitious of a great character, but desirous to show they have not a low one. They are fonder of eating than drinking, and are almost without exception incessant smoakers.

'The Ladies, particularly of the better Class, are in general, when they are young, good-looking—many of them handsome—as they get older they in common grow more lusty than exactly suits a fastidious English Eye. They are almost all well-educated, and some of them accomplished in Music, Dancing etc. If they do not arrive at the elegance of the European Fair Ones, they are much seldomer found wanting in a modest and becoming Deportment.' This passage may be compared with a published letter from Malcolm to his sister in which he says, 'The Frows were some of them very pretty, and appeared more lovely when their modest decent manners were contrasted with the ridiculous extravagance both in dress and manners, of some young ladies escaped from a London seminary on their flight to India to lead the fashions there, whose behaviour made me blush for them.'

After describing the housewifely virtues of the Dutch ladies, he proceeds: 'The Society at the Cape is too much of a sober and sedate nature to please the pallate of an Englishman, habituated to gayer Circles and to more Dissipated parties. It certainly wants life, and is rendered listless by its sameness. There is no place of public Entertainment, and Dances are very unfrequent. The only amusement is visiting, and being visited. . . . The Clergy have the appearance of being unassuming good men. The Farmers in the Country are in general Boorish, both in their manners and appearance, but are kind and hospitable to strangers. They, as well as the Inhabitants of the Town, are very religious.

'The Slaves appear in general happy, and I believe with a few exceptions are well-treated. There are numbers of Malays at the Cape, who are, like all their countrymen, remarkable for their spirit of Revenge, ungovernable rage, and Desperate Fury, which often occasions their running "*ahmuck*," a phrase well-known in the East. In such cases they Dishevel their Hair, tear their Clothes, and dart into the most frequented streets with a dagger in their hands, and kill all whom they meet indiscriminately, till they are put to death themselves. A most remarkable circumstance of this kind happened here some years ago. A young Prince of Eighteen had been taken in Rebellion at Batavia against

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the Dutch. He was sent by the Government in chains to the Cape, where he was at first employed as a working slave, and latterly was made one of the Fiscal's men, an Employment at which he showed the pointed abhorrence, from being obliged to act the part of an Executioner. He meditated a desperate revenge on his Enemies. It was concluded he first meant to sacrifice the Governor, as immediately after dark one evening he stabbed both the Centries at his gate to the heart. He was however, by the alarm, prevented from getting at the Governor. He immediately ran towards the principal streets. The night was very dark, and it was some time before the alarm spread; when it did all was in Consternation, every Family barring their doors, and fearing for the fate of those who were about. Soldiers were sent in different directions to try and apprehend him, but in vain. They found only those whom he had killed and wounded. When morn appeared, a most tragical sight was exhibited. He had killed and wounded seventeen. Those who were murdered were related to the best families in the town. A French Captain of a Trading vessel, remarkable for his strength and courage, went from a friend's house to go to his lodging after the alarm had spread. The friend wished him to take a sword, but he derided the idea, and shewing a stick, said he would flog the Boy if he came near him. His Body was found next day among the rest covered with wounds, and with every appearance of his having made a most violent struggle. What added to the general alarm was that the murderer was nowhere to be found. They dreaded his being concealed to make another Massacre. He had taken Refuge among the Rocks, and was perceived by a man who lived at the verge of the Town, coming down next evening to repeat the scene. The man, taking a Loaded Musquet in his hand, advanced towards him. When he thought his aim was certain, he fired and wounded him mortally. He was however, before he died, carried with lights at ten o'clock at night to the place of Execution, where he was deprived of the little life he had left on the wheel. He was tall and handsome in his person, and appeared of a humane, gentle disposition, and was particularly fond of children, with whom he used often to play.'

The Government of Cape Colony previous to the arrival of the British had consisted of a President and council of nineteen, though latterly almost the sole authority had been vested in the Commissioner-General, Abraham Sluysken. Good order was maintained in the town by the Fiscal, who had under him a

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considerable number of constables, and was empowered to take up rioters and other disorderly persons and punish them in a very summary manner. 'Almost all the Inhabitants of any respectability,' observes Malcolm, 'were in the Company's Service. All those whom the Governor favoured were employed as Contractors, others as Book-keepers or writers in the various offices, where business was carried on in a wonderfully minute and exact manner. Monopolies in other Countries are partial. Here every Article of trade, as well as the commonest articles of life, were Monopolized by the Dutch Company. They also supplied the Inhabitants with the Productions of Europe. The Company was not enriched by this ill-judged Policy, but their servants, thro' whose hands the property passed, amassed Fortunes.

'The Parties among themselves at the period of our arrival ran very high. French principles had been very generally dissiminated, particularly in the Country, where the ignorant Farmers were wrought up to a Frenzy by two or three designing men. They talked of nothing but establishing their Independence as a Republick, making Capetown a free Port, being as they termed it, the friends of all nations but the slaves of none. They spoke of imitating the Glorious examples set them in Europe. These sentiments prevailed so much that they superceded in reality of power the established Government. The Governor was obliged to act as the Burghers directed, and in my opinion, had we not arrived, he would have been deprived of his office, if not of his life. A List prescribing near One Hundred of the first Inhabitants, including him and all his adherents, had been made out, and they were to have been put to death had the party prevailed. This spirit is far from being iradicated. On the contrary, the futile and contemptible opposition which they made to us, has joined a spirit of Revenge to it, and were a French Invasion to take place, they would be soon openly joined by almost all the Inhabitants in the Country, and secretly aided by many in the Town.'

The average annual revenue of the Colony, translated into pounds sterling, amounted to about 30,000*l.*, and Malcolm enumerates the various imposts and monopolies from which it was raised. It is evident that during his short stay he gave a good deal of thought and attention to the affairs of the country and its future prospects, for his manuscript concludes with a short view of the measures that had already been adopted by the British with regard to the conquered colony, and of those which

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should be adopted if we were to retain possession of it after peace was restored.

'The Commanders at the Cape,' he observes, 'acted with the greatest prudence on gaining possession of it. They studied by every means in their power to conciliate the minds of the Inhabitants; convinced that the establishing of any new system of Government requires mature deliberation and cautious conduct, the regulations they made were merely temporary. They were content with giving the machine motion; to make it turn with vigour they left to others who had more time, and were more accustomed to such Tasks. The Cape, while we retain such a communication as we have at present with India, must be of great value to us for two reasons. In the first place, it furnishes in profusion every refreshment for our Ships; and in the second, we might suffer severely from its situation were it in the hands of a Powerful Enemy. It becomes our first policy to render it as prosperous as possible. This is only to be done by encouraging its trade and cultivation, and by finding an Export for its productions, Corn and Wine. If we keep the Cape after the War is over, its future prosperity will become of course a subject of serious consideration. I shall offer a few crude observations on what I consider would tend to that desirable end.

'Commissioners should be sent to settle its laws, and to give it a Government on as Economical principles as possible. This Government, except the immediate heads of Departments, to consist of natives of the Cape. All subordinate offices to be exclusively held by them. This measure is indispensibly necessary, if it is meant they should forget they are a conquered people, and become attached Loyal subjects . . . The greatest consideration would be to find an Export trade for their Corn, Wine, etc. etc. When a Peace takes place, a good deal would be sent to the French Islands; of their better wines a considerable quantity would find a Market in India, where its cheapness would secure its sale, and in return they would bring Coarse Cloths, Suggars, Tobacco, Coffee, Teas. Supplies of all kinds might be sent to Botany Bay, which is not a voyage of more than six or eight weeks, and at the same time that the Cape was benifited, a considerable saving to our Government would take place. I am not of opinion that a trade of any consequence could be established with the Brazil Coast. The Jealousy of the Portugese would be an insuperable barrier to this. They would fear the smuggling of Indian Goods. Taxes ought, if laid on, to be done with great

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caution, particularly on Exports. You check the spirit of Adventure which alone can make the place prosperous. Imported luxuries might be Taxed, and I think higher duties laid on wine, particularly on that of an Inferior quality, which is consumed at the Cape. The Tithe on Corn amounts to a triffling sum, and is a most unpopular Tax with that Body of men who ought to be most encouraged. It ought to be struck off, and a small Tax on Imported Goods made in its lieu, by which the same set of men would pay double the money, though in an indirect manner, without complaining.'

With these remarks, in which may be recognised the germs of the policy of the future Indian administrator, the manuscript concludes. In a published letter to his sister, written towards the end of his stay at the Cape, Malcolm says, 'I have got an honourable but troublesome employment in recruiting men out of the prisoners of war for the service of the Company in India. A set of finer fellows I never knew—all Germans. I have been very successful.' The young aide-de-camp was exceedingly happy in his chief, whom he describes as one of the best men he ever knew, 'mild and gentlemanly in manners, clear and just in his own conduct, and a declared foe to all dark dealings and peculation. He never will, I am convinced, make an indirect halfpenny. . . . He carries on a good-humoured war with my negligent habits, and my desire to please him makes me endeavour to conquer them. I never was a swearer, but I can venture to say that I never now, even in an unguarded moment, let slip an oath.' This testimony to General Clarke's character is worth noting, as he seems to have been badly treated in connection with the distribution of the booty captured during the campaign at the Cape. On November 15, 1795, Malcolm sailed with his chief for Madras, where we must take leave of him at the beginning of the most brilliant period of his career. General Craig was left in command of the garrison at the Cape, which was ruled by British governors until the Peace of Amiens in 1802, when it was restored to Holland. On the renewal of the war in 1806, it was again captured by the British under Sir David Baird, and has ever since remained in our possession, though it was not finally ceded to us by the Netherlands till the peace of 1815.

GEORGE PASTON.

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Hallows' E'en.

AWAKE, arise, you dead men all—dead women, waken you!
The hunter's moon is in the sky—her cruse of frosty dew
Earth empties; throw your covers off of grave-grass rank and green,
This is the dead men's holiday, 'tis Hallows' E'en.

The mother with her buried child falls into tender play,
The baby at her shrouded breast sucks soft and sleeps away;
The lover dead twelve years ago seeks out his buried dear
That put her broken heart to sleep but yesteryear.

'Behold, my love, my hair is black, your bonny hair is white;
How come my darling's eyes so dim?' 'With weeping many a night,
With sewing many a weary day through years that knew not you;
But I have done with rosemary and bitter rue.

'My garland of dry rosemary hangs where I used to pray;
My garden with its tansy flowers runs wild for many a day;
The box-plants that I tended well the passing children pull,
The green leaves strew the way they go, slow-foot, to school.

'And *I* have done with lessons now, have said my task all through,
And I may rest at last, sweetheart, as once I played, with you.'
He kisses her, he blesses her, he strokes her faded hair—
She never was so dear to him when she was fair.

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Brother and sister parted long by bitter words and blind,
Forget the years of severed ways with old love intheir mind.
The beggar that of hunger died, the girl that died of shame,
Are playing with dead children here some childish game.

Husband and wife forget the wrong that kept their souls apart,
Hand lies in hand as tenderly as heart beats upon heart.
This is the day for buried love to see as it is seen;
This is the dead men's holiday—All Hallows' E'en.

NORA HOPPER.

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Carpe Diem.

HE had fallen asleep while the sun was yet fierce with the drowsing afternoon; and, though it was now nearly eight o'clock, he still lay with his head on his arm, breathing peacefully, and unconscious of the cloud of midges that fluttered their jerky dance about his face. In one of his hands was clasped a pipe of well-coloured briar; and, face downwards, by his side, lay a book half hidden in the grass.

Presently a ray of sunset, level and red, broke through the leaves of the brier-bush, under which the sleeper was sheltering, and fell, like a broad sword of flame, full across his face. He rolled over drowsily, stretched out the hand that held the pipe, and brought it sharply against a spiny tendril hanging near. The pain aroused him and he sat up, opening grey eyes with the shadows of sleep and dreams yet in them.

'Hullo!' he said aloud, 'I've been asleep, have I? And for how long, I wonder!' He pulled his watch from the breast-pocket of his shabby Norfolk jacket and looked at it with surprise. 'Whew! eight o'clock, by Jove! Time to make tracks.'

He rose, pocketed the book, and, lighting his pipe, looked around him.

'What's become of Aleck?' he said, scanning closely the small clearing shut in on all sides by bright-leaved oaks and darker brushwood. 'Been rabbit-hunting, and fallen a victim to the keepers?'

A series of sharp whistles caused a yapping fox-terrier to burst through the undergrowth at a run and to come up alert and sharp-eared. 'Time to be off,' the young man said to the dog; 'I hope you've spent a more profitable afternoon than I have. You've not been asleep, at any rate, that I'll wager.'

Turning, he entered a narrow footpath among the trees, Aleck scouting eagerly in advance among the grass and bushes. Overhead, where the branches were thin enough to allow it to be seen, the sky was a fathomless main of turquoise pillowing slow clouds

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of shell-like pink. Hardly a breath of wind stirred the leaves on the boughs or set a-tremble the tall grasses and flowers by the path side. From somewhere far away came the garrulous evening clamour of rooks.

He walked slowly, for the hour suited his mood and he had no cause to hurry. By the time he was free of the wood the sun had set; and he halted a minute to look over the sloping sweep of meadow and parkland to the horizon-line of coppice standing out black against the clear burning of the west. Then he bent his steps across a field of grass still uncut and reaching to his knees, through a creaking turnstile, and along a path skirted on one side by a high hedge starred with dog-roses.

He had pursued this path for some distance when he came to a white gate across which a girl was leaning struggling with the rusty latch. The clank of the iron recalled his attention from thoughts which had wandered far enough away. He looked up, and, with a start of evident recognition, paused. She had her back half turned towards him, and the recalcitrant latch was occupying her so intently that she was utterly unconscious that anyone was near. For a second he regarded her hesitatingly, then turned sharply to his right and struck off across the meadow with the apparent end of avoiding a meeting.

But if such was his intention it was doomed to failure, for Aleck, unknowing of reserve, no sooner beheld the figure at the gate than he bounded towards it with many noisy signals of recognition and delight.

The girl turned, startled at the sudden sounds. For a few yards the other held on his way; then, muttering something between his teeth, swung round and retraced his steps. She was stooping down in acknowledgment of Aleck's welcome and only looked up when he was quite near.

'Why, Mr. Brampton,' she said with a frank laugh, 'I didn't expect to find you out this evening. I thought Aleck was on a private foray, after father's rabbits probably.'

He raised his hat.

'I didn't expect to meet you either,' he said with some awkwardness. 'I thought you weren't to come to the Hall till after your—till the end of July.'

'Well, now we've met you can do me one favour at least. I'd been struggling with that horrid dirty latch for ever so long; and was just thinking I'd have to forget I was grown up, and vault the gate, when I saw you.'

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He bent over the gate without a word while she stood by rubbing the dust and rust-stains from her fingers with a dainty handkerchief of lace. He accomplished the task at length, and held the gate open for her to pass through into the dusty lane.

'Thanks ever so much,' she said as she paused a minute. 'I don't know what I should have done if it hadn't been for you. Have you been here all the summer?'

'Yes, so much of it as we've had.'

'How dull!' She laughed, tilting her big straw hat back from her brow.

'It's been anything but dull,' he said, speaking more to himself than to her.

'How odd! I always find the country intolerable in summer. Well, "De gustibus non disputandum," as you scholars say. And you're a poet and rave over the birds and flowers and so forth. Give me the parks.'

'And yet you come down here!'

'Only from last night to the day after to-morrow, and only to get some things I wanted. I'm all alone at the Hall with my maid, like a princess in the Castle of Enchantment.'

'And the prince?'

'I left him in London;' then turning on him sharply: 'Why, Mr. Brampton, you never congratulated me!'

'A thousand apologies! I'm a rustic and a boor. I do congratulate you, though, from the bottom of my heart, and him too. Sir Lyon Lorraine is the happiest of men.'

She bowed, laughing.

'He says so now, and I shall endeavour to keep up the illusion. But I fully expected you would have written. You ought to have sent me a *pièce d'occasion*. You must write me an ode in your next book. Is it odes that you write? I never could read your verses, you remember.'

'Yes, I remember;' then, leaving the gate against which he had been leaning: 'Mayn't I have the pleasure of seeing you home? It is growing dark.'

'Thanks, I should be so glad. It's dreadfully silly, I know, but I'm always so frightened in these dark lanes at night. Are you sure you don't mind?'

'I and Aleck are entirely at your service, Miss Laud.'

'Why Miss Laud?' she asked as they began to walk. 'Six months ago it was always Rose.'

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'You never call me anything but Mr. Brampton.'

'That's out of respect. You are years older than I am.'

'Fourteen, to be exact.'

'Thirty-five, then, and I'm twenty-one. I always have looked on you as a kind of uncle. You've been grown up ever since I can remember you, when you came here first with your mother.'

'It is a difference. How old is Sir Lyon Lorraine?'

'To be frank'—with a laugh—'I never liked to ask him. I did ask his aunt, Lady Berkshire; but I don't think she quite liked it. She said rather huffily that he was quite a young man still. I suppose he is over forty.'

'And is he a kind of uncle too?'

'Certainly not! He is a rich man, and rich men never grow old: he is an ambassador too. Can you fancy me as Mrs. Ambassador?'

'I think the Embassy will be very fortunate.'

'I wish you wouldn't pay compliments. They don't suit you. You haven't the grand manner. Why can't you be natural, as you were in the old days when I wasn't anything but—when I wasn't Miss Laud?'

'I am preparing for the coming change. You are not to be Miss Laud long. You are engaged.'

'Yes; but not to you. It needn't make us stiff and shy of each other. I had looked forward to meeting you, and being with some one who wasn't my *fiancé*.'

'You find him so difficult?'

'Oh, no; of course he's charming. But I haven't known him very long. And then he always wants to talk sentiment. Middle-aged men always do.'

'But I am middle-aged.'

'Yes; but you write your sentiment instead of talking it. You have never been sentimental to me.'

'Never?' He threw more meaning into the word than he had intended, and flushed with vexation that he had not left her unanswered.

'Oh, yes; once I remember. I thought you had forgotten. It is two years ago.'

'Two years last month.'

'What a memory! You were very foolish on that occasion. You let your poetry get into your conversation. I laughed at you, do you remember? You were not serious.'

'Not in the least, of course.' His tone was dry and curt.

'You were not serious.' She repeated her words sharply.

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'You couldn't have meant it. Why, I was little more than a child. You did not mean it, Mr. Brampton?'

She paused at a spot where two lime-trees made a black pool of darkness on the twilight road. He did not reply for a moment, and then said shortly:

'It was for you to decide.'

'And you go on caring?'

'To the end, I suppose.'

She burst out with a hearty laugh of amusement, a laugh that rouladed a thousand sounds of silver on to the resting air.

'To the end!' she echoed mockingly, and then a fresh peal cut short her utterance.

Brampton stood in silence, biting his lower lip. At last he could endure it no longer and said, almost roughly:

'I am glad the idea amuses you. I have realised its humour myself at times. I should apologise for having said these things. I have not the grand manner, as you say, and doubtless Sir Lyon Lorraine——'

'Has never said anything so charming to me since first I knew him. At forty, one is more troubled about the eternity of one's life than of one's feelings. No, it is only you who could talk of loving to the end, and loving poor little me too, who never had an emotion of more than five minutes' duration. It is only in the country that one could talk of life-long passions. Sir Lyon has lived all his days in cities, and loved in every fashion from crinolines to tailor-made gowns.'

'You don't love this man, Rose?'

'He has ten thousand a year and a splendid position. He is talented and talked about. Can you doubt the sincerity of my affection?'

'You are not serious.'

'In what I say—yes, certainly. I respect and admire him; I am full of gratitude for the honour he does me.'

'And love?'

'You are a poet. You write about such things. Tell me, what is love?'

'I could have shown you once.'

She laughed again.

'And how, pray? You really are irresistible. Do you picture me in the little cottage, tending roses in a sun-bonnet and listening in rapture to your latest sonnet—me, who haven't a brain in my head, and who know nothing except how to spend money? How miserable we should both be!'

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'I could have made you a future. I'm not a fool.'

'Yes, and reproached me in five years with having made you lower your art. You are not a fool—no, you are worse than that—an idealist.'

'You at least are my ideal.'

'And a charming one. I'm pretty, I know, and lively, and young, but all that wouldn't be enough for you. When you see me in ten years, with the blush gone from my skin and the silver threads in my hair, you will thank me for having preserved you from myself.'

'And that is how you think we men care?'

'That is how you will know you cared when a few years are gone.'

'That you should preach this to me!'

'Is perfectly natural. I have lived in town, among men and women; and you have lived with the fields and your books and Aleck.' Then, changing her tone to one more serious: 'Ah! don't think me utterly frivolous. Forget about me, or think of me only as the child who heard and laughed and didn't understand.'

'And what of the woman who heard and understood and laughed all the same?'

'She only lasts a moment. You told me once of some dull philosopher who said that all things flow away and nothing remains. We are like that—laughing to-day and crying to-morrow, never the same.' She paused a moment, and then said in a matter-of-fact way:

'It is growing late, Mr. Brampton. I will not trouble you to come any further. I shall be at the lodge-gates in a moment, and will risk the bogies for that time. Good-night.'

She held out her hand, and then turned and ran off fleetly—a shadow in the shadows, but a shadow whose footsteps were accompanied by a thrill of fresh laughter, mocking and penetrant.

. . . . . .

The sun had made good progress through a cloudless June sky before Eustace Brampton awoke on the following morning, For a little while he lay still, conning over the scene of the previous night in all its details, and experiencing a feeling of considerable irritation. 'Heavens, what a piece of folly!' he said to himself moodily as he began the operation of his toilette. 'To think I should have blurted out that old story all over again! So much for the self-command I thought I had trained myself to!'

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He breakfasted at a table drawn up to the open window of the small sitting-room, with its bachelor furniture of books, pipes, and disorderly writing materials, and sat on smoking and watching the white and orange butterflies that trifled with the flowers in the garden, where hollyhocks, roses, and pinks grew in untended confusion, and what had been a lawn presented the appearance of a miniature hay-field.

'I think we'll take ourselves off for the day, doggie,' he said presently to Aleck, who sat by his side. 'If we loaf about here, the chances are we shall meet a certain lady, and then our feelings may lead us to forget our manners again. Shall we walk over to the Priory Ponds? You can worry waterfowl and I can play at fishing, and to-morrow, with her departure, we shall be free to wander again where fancy inviteth.'

He crossed the room, and through the inner door shouted directions to his one servant, a deaf old crone of sixty, to pack him some luncheon; then he took a rod from a rack on the wall, hunted a dusty creel from out of a lumbered corner, and slipped a book from the table into his pocket. In five minutes his preparations were complete and he was sauntering down the lane towards the woods.

His project, however, of escaping a meeting with his companion of the evening before was fated to frustration, for ere he reached the shelter of the trees he perceived her coming in face of him up the lane. She was walking briskly, and carried in one hand a great bunch of wild flowers, dog-roses, ragged robins, and the mealy blooms of the elder-tree.

For a second he was tempted to beat a hasty retreat; then, considering that, at so short a distance, he must be seen and recognised, he threw up his head and walked on defiantly. She greeted him with a smile and a glance of brown eyes from under the big straw hat.

'Out for the day, Mr. Poet?' she asked lightly and without a trace of shyness. 'Going to whisper to the daisies and listen to the birds?'

He nodded.

'You got back to the Hall in safety?'

'Quite, thanks to your kind escort. It was pitch dark in the avenue and I ran all the way.'

'And laughed all the way too?'

'No; I soon stopped laughing,' shaking her head gravely. 'I didn't want to laugh at all; but there are cases when one must

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choose between laughter and tears, and laughter doesn't give one red eyes.'

'It is the better attitude to take towards life for many reasons. I fancy Sir Lyon will prefer a wife who deals in smiles.'

'Oh, Sir Lyon'—with a disdainful shrug of the shoulders—'I had forgotten all about him! Why do you remind me? It is too fine and warm to think of marriage and serious things. I like the country in the morning; it is only the stillness and shadows of evening that make me afraid. It is too grand then, too solemn—like being in a great grey cathedral; it bores me.' Then, touching the rod he carried, 'Are you going fishing?'

'At the Priory Ponds.'

'Do you remember when you used to take me over there and row me about in the leaky old boat?'

'Yes—great days those.'

'What fun if you could take me again, to-day!'

She spoke lightly enough, but the faintest eddy of colour passed over her face, and she looked at him in an expectation of reply that was not quite indifferent.

Was she natural? he wondered; had she forgotten last night's talk? or was she a mere coquette anxious to make essay of her power over him, to prove the strength of her net's meshes?

'I wish I could.'

'And why not?'

'The conventions must be considered. You are a grown-up nowadays and engaged to be married. It would not do for you to be seen roaming the country with a ragamuffin like me.'

'Nobody need know. I'm all alone at the Hall. The servants will think I've walked over to some of the neighbours, if they think at all; and I always believe that servants have far too much on hand among themselves to trouble about their masters. The Priory Ponds are always deserted. We should meet no one.'

He shook his head with a smile.

'It is the last time.'

She spoke very low and in a voice that was almost one of entreaty. A mad longing sprang up in Brampton's heart to assent; but he set it aside and answered almost rudely:

'You are talking of impossibilities, you know, Miss Laud. It is out of the question.'

'Oh, quite so.' She turned her back. 'It is impossible, as you say. I hope you will have good sport, Mr. Brampton. Good-bye. I leave for London to-morrow.'

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Did a tremor in her voice belie the indifference of her words, or did his ears play him false? She had turned away. He thought he saw her shoulders move in a manner that spoke of an emotion it cost her an effort to control.

In a second he was at her side.

'Of course I was only laughing,' he said, laying a hand on her arm. 'Of course you can come. It can't matter a bit. We shall meet no one; and, even if we do, we are old enough friends to take a day's tramp together, and for the world to think no harm. You forgive me? You meant what you said? You will come?'

She looked at him laughingly out of eyes none the less bright for a suspicion of tears risen perilously near shedding.

'You really want me?'

'I always want you.'

'You won't after to-day. A few hours of my society will cure you of that, and you will wish you had been alone with your pipe and book.'

'Wait and see.'

He spoke joyously. Granted that she were a coquette, and were merely following a coquette's caprice, he loved her none the less. This one day of her was suddenly grown a great thing to him. He was jealous of its fleet minutes already, resolved to live it to its full, and not to look beyond.

She turned now and began to walk by his side, talking volubly. For a few minutes he felt awkward—at a loss, then fell into her mood, and chattered as lightly as she.

In the shade of the trees, through the thick bracken and long grass, she moved like the chequered sunlight that danced there, now stooping to pick a flower, now halting to laugh at Aleck's yelping rushes at imaginary game in the brushwood. The place was alive with the music of birds.

He had on previous occasions found the walk to the Priory Ponds a tedious one. To-day he counted grudgingly every step of the way, and gave a sigh as they passed out of the wood and stood looking down at the two large sheets of water that lay below them still and blue in the dancing air and breathless heat of noon.

They made their way down to the dilapidated boat-house, and found the old boat with the oars inside her. A few minutes' baling was all that was needful to render her as seaworthy as ever, and they rowed lazily out into the lake.

'Just like old times,' the girl said with a sigh of pleasure as

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she lay back in the bows, facing Brampton, her lap full of the flowers she had gathered by the way, which she now began idly arranging.

He looked at her in silence. Was it a dream? He asked himself the question again and again, as he listened to the plash of the oars and the thrill of a lark, a song lost in the sky's blue deepness. Was it a dream? Yes, but a day dream, thank Heaven and no mere delight of fancy caught at 'twixt sleep and waking.

She talked as they floated on and she arranged her nosegay; now of old times when she had been a child, and he a lad fresh from Oxford. She recalled his mother, dead these seven years, who had felt almost a mother's love for the daughter of the widowed squire. Then, with a change of mood, she broke out with a laugh and an anecdote of some prank half-forgotten, or some humour her shrewd girl's wit had noted during three London seasons.

She insisted on taking an oar presently, and he sat watching the sway of her shapely shoulders, and her firm lips set hard over the effort. By the time they reached the middle of the lake it was long after noon, and they rifled the creel of its luncheon, laughing over the humble fare of bread and cheese and the appetites that made it disappear so rapidly. Then they lay back at stern and bow, and watched lazily the red and green float that rested annoyingly still on the sunny water. Fishing proved but little to her fancy, and he was content to row her over to a bed of water-lilies, queenlike on their thrones of dark leaves; and they leaned over to pluck them, the boat swaying, and causing her now and then to give a little scream of pretended fear.

If it could only last for ever! The idea came to him repeatedly, and every time he shook it off as tending to mar the moment's ineffable sweetness. She, for her part, seemed to have no thought save for the present; and it was at his suggestion that, at length, they obeyed the warning of the declining sun, and turned the boat's head shoreward.

She sprang on to the bank and waited for him to hand her the flowers.

'What an armful!' she said, pressing their cool blossoms, already beginning to fade, against her cheek. 'And what a wild bouquet it is too! But nicer than the cut flowers and orchids the London dandies bring one, with prettily cut-and-dried speeches and stiff little bows.'

He moored the boat, and then came to her side as she stood looking over the water.

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'What a splendid day!' she said; 'and the last of them too. In three months I shall be "My Lady;" and then good-bye to anything but conventions! If one goes boating in those days it will be with smart women, who are afraid of wetting their skirts or showing their ankles, and the little dandies whose backs are broken after half an hour in a canoe.'

She turned away, a grave expression on her face, and they began the ascent of the gradual slope, with its flaming gorse bushes, that led towards the wood and the homeward road.

For some time they went on in silence. The hush of evening seemed to exercise a spell over the girl's spirits. She looked down pensively at her flowers, touching them lightly with her lips now and then. Brampton's heart was too full of feeling to admit of his making conversation.

'How quickly they fade!' she said softly at last. Even the great strong lilies begin to look tired and wilted. To-morrow they'll be as dead as to-day.'

'Yes, to-day,' he said in a voice that all his efforts could not keep quite steady: 'my day!'

'Your day!'—she repeated his words twice; then very low: 'I meant you should have it.'

'Then it wasn't a chance that I met you this morning?'

They had passed out of the woods now, and stood in the soft orange of the afterglow, facing each other.

'To be frank, no,' she said, fingering her flowers nervously and looking down. 'You think I have no heart, Mr. Brampton; I know I am trivial and worldly enough; but I felt what you said to me last night. It came to me as a shock, a great surprise; and I laughed partly because I didn't quite believe you, and partly because I was afraid to do anything else. I felt afterwards that I had been cruel; and I was coming to make friends. We do part friends, don't we?' She held out her hand. He caught it, and, encouraged by the gentleness of her words, began the appeal that had lain at his lips all day. For a minute or two she heard him quietly, a dreamy expression in her eyes and half-parted lips. Then she interrupted him with almost a cry, freeing her hand violently from his.

'Don't ask it! Don't ask it!' she said beseechingly. 'It isn't in me to give it you. You think so now, and, to-day,' her voice breaking with a sob, 'I—I thought so, too, for an hour. But it's only a dream, a dream we should both wake from. I couldn't live the life, and you'd find me weak and shallow in the end.'

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She paused a minute, made a great effort after calmness, and said: 'It's best as it is. You've had your day; don't ask for more; don't, if you—you love me as you say you do!'

He drew near her again, his arms outstretched, words of incoherent entreaty on his lips, but she pushed him back gently.

'Let me go now,' she said simply; 'I can't change, nor can you; but think of me always as I've been to-day. Forget that I've laughed, or seemed not to care; forget——'

She broke off suddenly, and, stooping, began to pick a long spray of bramble from the hem of her skirt. He knelt to aid her, his mouth parched and dry, his heart stunning him with its own sound.

His hat had fallen off, and as he knelt bare-headed the girl bowed down to him, tremulous-lipped, dim-eyed. He looked up at her in silent wonder.

For a space she hesitated; then suddenly drooped her head and kissed him full on the brow.

'I gave you your day, remember! It was all I could give,' she said, and, turning quickly, ran from him across the meadow and through the gate that opened on the pathway to the Hall.

ARTHUR F. BELL.

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
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A Study in School Jokes.

THE position of a teacher is no sinecure, least of all when correcting examination papers. It is a task upon which he must concentrate all his powers, for his judgment will be accepted as final, and much depends upon it. Burdened with a heavy sense of responsibility, he begins with a careful reconsideration of the questions set, and decides on a standard of marking. After correcting half a dozen papers, he concludes, very reluctantly, that it is too lenient or too severe, and must be altered. He starts again, laboriously weighing the merits of each answer. This one shows knowledge, but is it sufficiently to the point? That one is correct as far as it goes, but does it go far enough to receive full marks? A third answer is rather vague, but not wrong. What is it worth? The gist of a fourth lies as 'two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff,' but their slender value must be estimated. He reads and re-reads, he compares answer with answer and paper with paper, until his powers of subtle discrimination are nearly exhausted. After an hour or two of this severe concentration his head grows hot. He would put the remaining papers away to finish at another time, but he has fairly got the hang of his work now, and, dreading what it would cost him to recover his carefully adjusted standard of marking, he plods on. Having at length reached the last paper, he is disturbed by an uncomfortable fear that one candidate—he has no idea which—was given a mark less than another for some point equally well brought out. He tries to argue down the feeling, but after some palavering has to give in. Another weary search through the tortured pile convinces him that there was no mistake after all. It is the last straw! Human endurance can no more. With a buzzing head and a deep-breathed vow that he will never again be the dupe of a morbid conscience, he rises from his seat a mental and moral wreck!

It is indeed a brain-racking process; I know of none more so.

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But, like all other trials incidental to 'the noblest profession in the world,' it has its noble compensations; and there is one, the most obvious, if not the most valuable, which often lies hidden leaven-like in the doughy substance of the examiner's task.

I mean the unconscious humour, the ingenious guesses, the surprising anachronisms, the unbridled imagination revealed by the youthful brain under the cruel pressure of examination. These are so astonishing that unless a man have a soul above a joke, or an uncommonly dull set of papers, he will probably smile over his work at least as often as he groans.

As for the unfortunate being who devotes himself to the delicate and laborious art of teaching unequipped with a saving sense of humour, of him it must be said that no man has more woefully mistaken his vocation. Unconscious of his deficiency—perhaps even because of it—he will do his duty with care and complacency; but his pupils, not knowing what they lack, yet feel that 'shades of the prison-house' follow darkly in his train as he enters the class-room. No gleam, no sparkle, nothing to lighten the heavy fare he presents for their absorption; and when he goes he leaves behind him a feeling of mental indigestion both painful and unnatural.

Nevertheless, the teacher is the chief loser. The crushed spirits of his small victims will raise themselves at his exit like blades of grass after the garden-roller has passed over them; but he, the roller, will revolve along his heavy way with never a share in the springing life he so conscientiously depresses. Truly such a man's possible sources of compensation are grievously limited.

But to return to the subject in hand. I have by me a great variety of these 'school jokes,' *bonâ-fide* specimens unconsciously contributed term after term by two schools with which I have had much to do—the one a high school, attended by children of well-educated parents; the other a large school, where the pupils are drawn chiefly from the lower middle class.

I mention this because it is interesting to observe the effect of the different home-surroundings in the sort of mistakes made by these two classes of children. For example, the illiterate homes of the lower class are responsible for many anachronisms, which are the evident result of a very limited range of thought and reading; while in the mistakes of the higher-class child one can often find evidence of a wider and more varied field of ideas—so varied, indeed, that they become somewhat mixed sometimes, and appear on paper in very novel and surprising combinations.

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I find that most of my jokes fall very naturally into one or other of five classes.

First, there are mistakes of spelling. These are, of course, the most numerous, and as a rule quite uninteresting, except as eliciting our sympathy by reminding us of our own early struggles with the unreasonable orthography of the English language. Sometimes, however, they play such astonishing pranks with the intended meaning of the writer that they are worth recording.

'The blood in the body is taken by means of tubs to the heart and there detained.'

'All alkalies have a soupy feeling.'

'A volcano is a burning mountain that has a creator and throws out melted rooks.'

'Maidstone is the centre of the pop trade.'

'I came sore and conquered.'

'Unwhacked along Clitumness
Grazes the milk-white steer.'

'The night rat came rolling up ragged and brown.'

'His brain was teething with grand ideas in all directions.'

'If the earth did not revolt, we should always have equal nights and days.'

'Stored in some trouser-house of mighty kings.'

I have preserved the two following for the utter confusion of anyone who shall dare to deny that words of deepest wisdom may fall from the lips, or pens, of babes.

'The lungs are organs of execration.'

'The soul has two sides, a dark and a white, and it hides the white side.'

The next class of mistakes are those which are the result of unsuccessful guessing. The morality of conscious, deliberate guessing at examinations is perhaps doubtful, but I frequently find on inquiry that the perpetrators of such suspicious-looking answers wrote down what they honestly believed to be facts. And even if they confessed to being uncertain of their ground, which of us has not been guilty of the same offence under similar harassing circumstances? At any rate, the practice provides such an amusing study of youthful ingenuity, that we may easily forgive the offenders. Here are a few examples:

Q. What do you understand by the following:—Pig iron, Bristol boards, lumber trade, shoddy, insulators, buffers, lamp-black?

A. 'Pig-iron is what they make the nose rings for pigs of.'

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'Bristol boards are schools where very poor children go.'

'People who keep pawnbrokers' shops are said to be in the lumber trade.'

'Shoddy is a kind of drink much used in Ireland.'

Insulators are: 1. 'Islanders.' 2. 'Machines used to freeze cream and other liquids to make ice.' 3. 'People who insult other people.'

A buffer is: 1. 'A thing that buffs.' 2. 'A hard blow.' 3. 'A wild animal.' 4. 'A kind of ox used to plough the fields in some countries.'

'Lampblack is the man who sees to the lamps.'

Q. 'How does 0 differ from the 9 other digits?'

A. '0 differs in not having a tail.'

'A schoolboard is a board put to say what things are to be done in the school.'

'A school that girls can go to. They sleep there.'

'A watershed is a shed for keeping water in.'

'The three highest mountains in Great Britain are Ben Nevis, Ben Lomond, and Ben Jonson.'

Q. 'How did William I. put down the rebellions of the English?'

A. 'He put them down in Domesday Book.'

No examination papers are more interesting to correct than those on history, Biblical or otherwise. From these I have drawn my third class of blunders—anachronisms. Apart from the amusement they afford, they are really valuable as reminding us, who sometimes forget, how difficult it is for the child-mind, 'moving about in worlds unrealised,' to grasp the idea that things were not always what they now are, especially if, as I pointed out above, very little is done at home to develop or guide the imagination. Yet it comes upon one with a slight shock to read that 'the priest of Midian reproved his daughters for not inviting Moses to come in to tea;' that 'David boarded with the Witch of Endor;' and that 'when Moses' mother laid him in the ark among the bulrushes she did not forget to give the baby its bottle.' Did babies have bottles in those days? Why not?

The following are also funny:

'When Earl Godwin came back to England all the people flocked to the station to meet him.'

'The earliest newspaper of those times was the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.'

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'The Holy Place is lit up with gas, and so the priests did not have to carry the light about with them.'

'The curfew was rung at eight o'clock every night for everyone to put out their gas and fires.'

Next I class together mistakes where one can see traces of the right idea, but it has not yet taken definite form in the writer's brain, and, like the poet's dream, it suffers some distortion when forced to clothe itself in the hard garb of black and white. And here again, even if we are no poets, we can sympathise. We can remember the relentless, 'Well, if you know what you mean you can say it. Next boy!' and how 'next boy,' with a readier vocabulary, promptly gave vent to the knowledge of which our head was full, gained his mark, and set us meditating on such an apparent lapse in the justice of Providence.

Here are a few examples:

'The base of a triangle is the side which we don't talk about.'

'A triangle is sometimes regarded as standing upon a select inside, which is then called its base.'

'The apex of the heart is placed downwards and slightly upwards.'

'The Subjunctive Mood is used in a doubtful manner.'

'Rapids are pieces of water which run with great force down the middle of rivers.'

'Excommunication means that no one is to speak to some one.'

'The North and South Poles mean that if a ship comes near one and looks for the farther one she can't see it.'

'The earth is round, like a plate, but some people think it is flat. The North Pole has not been sufficiently explored to judge of that part being round.'

'A diplomat is some one who puts true things in a better (!) light, which changes them and alters their sense.'

'Polynesia is a group of small islands in the Pacific which are under the protection of the British, otherwise seem very quiet and peace-loving.'

'Evaporation means going quickly and condensation means going slowly.'

'Fiction is something which is believed in but which is nothing.'

'Fiction,' so runs a 'school joke' under my hand, 'is the imaginary power; it may be founded on fact, but not necessarily the strict truth.' I do not think I can find a better definition for

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my fifth class, provided that special emphasis is laid on the 'may,' for the foundation of fact is not always obvious, though the 'imaginary' power is rampant and beyond dispute.

'"Beowulf" was composed out of England and brought to it in the heads of Roman soldiers.'

'America is oblong in shape; it has a long coast-line. In it there is the United States of Canada and the Sahara Desert.'

'The cause of day and night is that the sun turns round on us at night, and we can only see the back; and in Africa and the Antipodes it is often day when it is night here. The sun turns round and leaves his back on the other side.'

'The Atlas Mountains run round Africa, followed by the Kong Mountains and others of less importance.'

'Warsaw is on the river Vistula, but it used to be on the river Pola.'

'A watershed is a thing that when the soil in part of a river stands straight up on one side and slants tremendously the other side, the water is obliged to go up the soil on one side and come slanting down the other side—that is what they call a watershed.'

'About this time the Pope turned the bull out of the church.'

'Climate is an imaginary belt of the globe parallel to the equator; it is so called by earlier geographers because the difference of these climes depends upon the inclination of the spheres.'

'The water nearest land is most salt, owing to the rivers that run into it. The water is least salt between the tropics. The real reason for the saltness nearest land is unknown, but as the rivers run into the sea they bear on their surface earth, stones, and other soluble substances, that condense and turn to salt. The reason for the water not being so salt near the tropics is easily explained. The sun, shining down with all its force upon the land and water in the tropical regions, draws up the salt, and it condenses and evaporates.'

'A lake is a piece of water that the land has grown round.'

'Roman citizenship was a ship on which the Romans went out fishing free of charge.'

'John died soon afterwards, after eating lampreys, trying not to think of his grief. Anselm was a very good man. John asked him to be archbishop when he was ill, and he said it was like putting on his nightcap before he went to bed.'

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The next I quote separately as an example of budding insular complacency, and as verifying my conviction that it is quite superfluous to seek to instil a feeling of patriotism in the youth of England. The difficulty is to make them believe that any other country is of the least importance.

'The Armada was destroyed by a power not of man; it was defeated by English sailors in the New World.'

The Revival of Learning. 'Colet came into France and was much surprised to see how the people were all raving on learning; they wanted to learn Greek, so that they could read some more about the ancient Britons.'

I will conclude with one by a Birmingham scholar—more local but not less sublimely egotistical.

'Parliament is a place where they go up to London to talk about Birmingham.'

E. M. GRIFFITHS.

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In the Name of a Woman.

By Arthur W. Marchmont,

Author of 'By Right of Sword,' 'A Dash for a Throne,' &c.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN FULL CRY.

THE night that followed was a memorable one in the history of Bulgaria, and, as an incident of the great event, it brought the crisis in our affairs.

It was the night in which by the machinations of the Russian agents the Prince was abducted, and at the point of the pistol was forced to sign an abdication of his throne. It is not necessary for me to write about an event which has been often enough described, nor to tell how the crowd of unpatriotic and disloyal officers led their troops to surround the Palace, ordered them to fire into it, and then breaking in forced his Highness to leave; and hurried him off to Nikopolis, making him a prisoner on board his own yacht, to be landed on Russian territory.

Exactly what led up to this crisis I do not know. My opinion is that General Kolfort's offer to maintain him on the throne on certain relaxed conditions was genuine and would have been fulfilled, but at the same time the alternative plot was already in progress, and this scheme was hastened forward on the Prince's refusal of the Russian terms.

Had our own preparations but been a couple of weeks more forward the issue would have been different; but, as it was, that *coup* set the final seal on our failure.

The event took us absolutely by surprise. I had retired for the night wondering what the morrow would bring forth, when my household were roused by a loud summons at the door. My first thought was that the General had again sent his men to arrest

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me; and I was for resisting to the utmost, when it was discovered that the summons came from Zoiloff and Spernow, who had come in hot haste to bring me the great news and to confer with me as to our actions.

The perilous nature of the crisis was obvious, and my first thought was naturally for the Princess, with a deep and bitter regret that she had not done what I had urged so strongly—used the means we had to make a dash for the frontier.

Choosing half a dozen of my servants on whom I knew I could rely implicitly, we armed them fully and set out on foot for the Princess's house. The sounds of firing from the direction of the Palace reached us as we made our way through the streets, in which the people were beginning to cluster in groups drawn by curiosity and alarm, discussing in high and excited tones the meaning of the disturbance.

No one stayed or questioned us on the way to the Princess's house, but when we reached it we halted in amazement. Every window was dark, not a light showing anywhere, while the gates and doors and forecourt were thronged with armed men.

'They've captured her!' exclaimed Zoiloff, instantly. 'And we are helpless against such a crowd.'

'We must know the truth,' I said, my heart misgiving me. 'You are best known, Spernow; go forward and try to ascertain the truth, whether the Princess has been carried away, and, if so, where.'

He went at once; and then Markov stepped up to me.

'I think I can find out all. I am sure to know some of the men,' he said.

I sent him after Spernow, and stood back in the shadow to wait with such patience as I could command. My excitement and fear made me like a madman, till I felt I could almost have rushed single-handed against the troops and tried to hack my way into the house.

'This means devilish mischief, Count,' said Zoiloff in a hushed tone. 'You will be the next.'

'I care nothing for myself, but I will save her,' I said between my teeth.

Spernow came back in a few minutes.

'I can learn nothing. The men have orders to hold their tongues. But the Princess is not in the house; at least I gather that.'

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'Then why the devil do they guard it?' cried Zoiloff fiercely.

'They may be waiting for orders where to go next.'

'It will be to your house, Count. You mustn't return there, but fly at once and leave us to settle this.'

'When I leave you either I shall be dead or the Princess will be safe,' I answered hotly. 'Let us wait for Markov; he is a shrewd, cunning fellow, and may find out something.'

'I am anxious about Mademoiselle Broumoff, Count,' said Spernow, eager, as I could see, to get tidings of her. I sympathised with him, as well may be understood.

'Go in quest of her at once,' I said; 'and, when you can, return to my house, and we will thresh out some plan of action. We may have news by then.'

He was off like the wind, and Zoiloff and I waited on in silence for Markov to return.

He seemed an age in coming, and I strained my eyes in trying to catch some trace of him in the crowd of moving figures that thronged the place. I gave a deep sigh of relief when at length I saw him come out of the gate, stand idly a moment glancing up and down the street, and then, as if sauntering away in obedience to the merest curiosity, cross the road to us.

'Well?' I asked eagerly.

'I have news. We had better not stay longer here, your Honour,' he whispered, and walked away, speaking rapidly as we walked. 'The Princess Christina left here some two hours ago. She is a prisoner in the hands of General Kolfort's men. She was roused by them just before midnight and compelled to enter a carriage that was in waiting, and was driven off under a strong guard, with a considerable escort of mounted men.'

'Where have they taken her?' cried Zoiloff and I, in a breath together, when he paused.

'The actual destination is not known, but the carriage started for the south road, that leading to Liublian; and one suggestion is that they will carry her to Ichtman or on to Samakovo, where there is a strong Russian detachment.'

'Do you know who was with her? Was anyone?' I asked.

'Yes; Mademoiselle Broumoff was taken from home at the same time, and I believe was in the carriage with the Princess.'

'Did you hear anything concerning the Count?' asked Zoiloff.

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'I was asked if your Honour was still at liberty, and advised to look out for a new master. I shall not do that yet, sir, I hope,' he added; 'not till you tell me, at any rate.'

I liked his faithfulness in choosing such a moment to assure me of his attachment.

'It may be a dangerous service for the next few hours, Markov; but you have done excellently in this—excellently.'

We were now hastening back to my house, for I had already resolved to follow on the Princess's trail instantly; to rescue her at any hazard, and hurry her across the frontier, fighting our way, if need be, through all who challenged us. Zoiloff was with me heart and soul; and we set about the preparations with an energy almost feverish in its earnestness.

Fortunately I had a large stud of first-rate horses; and every man in the place who could be relied upon was armed to the teeth and mounted, and provided with enough rations to last through the coming day. I had taken care to provide myself with a large sum in gold, so as to be ready for any such emergency as the present; and this I took with me. We numbered nearly twenty men—all trained, vigorous, staunch fellows, and all zealous to the heart's-core in our cause.

When we were ready I took Zoiloff aside. I knew his resolute character and his fidelity to the Princess; but I knew also that his career lay in Bulgaria, and that if he were caught with me on such an enterprise the consequences to him would be worse than disastrous; and I did not wish to embroil him any further.

'Zoiloff, I am going to speak as a friend. No one can see the end of this business of ours. We may find ourselves face to face with the troops and may have to risk an encounter with them. For me it does not signify. I am an Englishman, and can scramble out of the mess somehow. For these men here there is no great danger either. Old Kolfort won't deal harshly with servants who can plead that I forced them into it. But with you it is all different. You are an officer, and to fight against the troops is an act of deadly treason—mutiny probably, punishable with Heaven knows what penalties. Now, as my friend, will you let me ask you to stay here and guard our interests in Sofia?'

He heard me impatiently, and looked at me keenly.

'Are you serious, Count?' he asked.

'Yes, my friendship——'

'Stop, please, or I may say something I should regret, Count,' he broke in bluntly. 'I should not reckon that man a friend who

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would urge me to be a coward. Were you any other man, I would not brook it once; and even you will put a strain on our friendship if you breathe a word of this again. We are wasting time. Let us to horse. I have not deserved this of you, Count, and if I thought I had I'd shoot myself for a cur. Are you the only man that can love the Princess?'

'Forgive me, friend. I beg your pardon,' I cried, vastly moved by his words; and I held out my hand.

'I am no rival of yours,' he said earnestly, as he wrung it. 'But if a hair of her head be injured, I will know by whom, and if it does not go hard with him I am no man. Come, I am hot to be away.'

As we were mounted, Spernow dashed up on horseback, pale of face and wild of manner.

'Nathalie has gone, too,' he exclaimed, and I told him very briefly what we believed had occurred.

In another minute we started, riding in couples and at some distance. Quietly, until we were clear of the town, was the order I gave; then join, and forward in full cry. The firing had not entirely ceased at the Palace when we set out, and an occasional report reached us as we wended our way through the city by different streets to the point on the south road where we were to join. So much was now astir in the city that even our cavalcade caused little or no comment or surprise. Strange tidings and rumours were now on the wind, flying everywhere, and the excitement and confusion they spread caused our movements to pass unchallenged.

Once at the meeting-place we pricked our horses into a gallop and set out, a stern determined band dead set on revenge, and resolved every man of us to achieve the end we had at the cost of life itself.

I rode at the head, with Markov as guide; Zoiloff and Spernow behind me, and the rest, four abreast, keeping order like a small cavalry detachment. The night was bright with moonlight, and the country lay around us everywhere still and sunk in sleep. Scarce a soul was astir in the hamlets through which our road passed, but I took the utmost precaution to prevent any mischance.

As we reached each village, I called a halt and sent Markov forward to see that all was clear, for I half expected that Kolfort would have foreseen our pursuit of Christina and have posted men to stop us. To save time we gave Markov three minutes; and if

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he did not return or fire a shot to give an alarm, we clattered after him at full gallop.

So long as it was night, there was no one of whom we could make inquiries, and thus we were riding somewhat at random; but as soon as the dawn should begin to streak the east I knew the peasants would soon be astir, and that then we might pick up a trace or two of those we were seeking.

Then Markov made a valuable suggestion.

'Will your Honour let me ride on ahead some half mile or so? We are nearing Liublian now, and if I am alone I may get news which would be refused to so large a body of us together. I may see any danger, too, and be able to warn you.'

'A prudent thought, Markov,' I said, bidding him ride on. 'If we see you riding back to us, or if we hear you fire a shot, we shall draw rein and wait till you join us;' and with that he plunged ahead at full speed, and we watched him till he was out of sight over a rise in the road.

I told Zoiloff the arrangement, and we were discussing the situation in jerky whispers while we halted, when one of my men came galloping up in great excitement.

'My lord, we are being pursued. I had to stay behind to get a stone out of my horse's hoof, when I heard the sound of horses galloping some way behind me.'

'How far behind?'

'I cannot say—the night is very still. Perhaps half a mile, or maybe a mile.'

'Ride on at once and overtake Markov, and warn him to draw into cover. Off with you! We must find out who the horsemen are and their strength,' I added to Zoiloff.

'There is a small wood there, which will do for cover, Count,' he replied instantly. 'Let the men ride there and take our horses, while you and I stay on foot to watch the new-comers.'

I told Spernow to post the men in the covert, and Zoiloff and I lay down in some bushes to wait for the pursuers.

It was an anxious moment, and we lay close together, whispering in hurried conference. We had not long to wait.

'I hear them,' whispered Zoiloff, gripping my arm. His ears were quicker than mine, but a moment later I, too, caught the clatter of horses' feet and then the clash of accoutrements.

'Troops,' I whispered; and we both peered between the bushes, straining our ears, through the grey twilight of the dawn.

As they reached the foot of the rise near the top of which we

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were concealed the party slackened speed, first to a trot and then to a walk, to ease the horses.

'I hope to Heaven none of our horses neigh,' whispered Zoiloff earnestly.

I made no reply. I was too anxious for speech, for such a chance might ruin everything. I almost held my breath as the first of the horsemen came into view, and then my companion gripped my arm again in a spasm of irresistible excitement.

'Kolfort, by the luck of hell!' he breathed, and sure enough, in the second line of three, I recognised the grim, stern face of that implacable man.

So excited was I that I almost forgot to count the men with him, and a thousand thoughts, wild and incoherent, rushed through my mind as the band of horsemen came up at a quick walking pace, got abreast, then passed on up the rise, and dipped out of sight as they broke again into a gallop, the footfalls of the horses dying away very quickly over the summit of the hill.

'I hope to the Lord he's going to the Princess!' exclaimed Zoiloff as we scrambled to our feet.

'More likely he wants to be in a position to prove his absence from the city when the Prince is being carried off,' said I. 'But wherever he's going we must know and follow.'

I ran across to where our men were posted and told off one of them to follow hot on the heels of the party and be ready to guide us, and I gave him enough start of us to allow for our not being heard.

'It's clear he wasn't following us,' said Zoiloff. 'There were only twelve men all told in the party. What a chance we have missed! If we had only known, we could have lined the road just where we two lay, and they'd have walked right into the trap. Only twelve to nearly twenty of us! and we should have had him safe enough. God! If we could only get hold of him, the safety of the Princess would be a simple matter enough.'

'We may do it yet,' said I as I mounted, and we set off again in pursuit of those we had believed to be in pursuit of us.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

THE ATTACK.

It was true enough of course that we had missed a glorious chance in not surprising and overcoming General Kolfort's party and making him a prisoner; but with our end in view it would have been madness to risk an encounter when we had absolutely no knowledge of the strength opposed to us. A defeat at such a moment would have overthrown all our plans and have involved the abandonment of Christina to whatever fate might be in store for her.

It was true, too, that in allowing the General to pass and his men to get in touch with the others who were guarding the Princess, we had increased our difficulties; and the result of a hurried consultation with Zoiloff as we rode forward was a decision to seek and overtake the General's party and try conclusions with them.

For this purpose, however, we had wasted valuable time, and the now rapidly lightening dawn greatly lessened the chance of catching them unawares, and vastly increased the risk. But we were in no mood to count the chances too gingerly, and we dashed along at as rapid a pace as our horses could travel.

The road was execrable—rough and uneven beyond description, with large loose stones scattered about in it in a way that made the going exceedingly difficult, and in parts galloping was impossible.

We had ridden in this way about half an hour, constantly having to draw rein for either the roughness of the road or the steep hills, when we came up with the man we had sent to warn Markov, and the other who had been despatched to follow the General's party.

Markov had undertaken the spy work in preference to the man I had despatched, and the change was a good one. I had not been free from the fear that Markov might be surprised by the General, despite our precaution in sending to warn him, and it was good news that he was safe.

We did not stay our progress a moment. The men rode by my side as each in turn gave me his report, and then dropped back into the ranks behind as we thundered forward, eager to overtake the General before he should fall in with any other troops; and

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the best news that the men brought us was that we were gaining fast upon them, and that Kolfort was not far ahead.

This spurred us to further effort, and we were rushing on filled with the hope of catching him, when I saw Markov in the distance galloping wildly in our direction. I ordered a halt instantly, and drew up to await him.

'I have tracked them, my lord,' he said hurriedly; 'but the news is bad. General Kolfort and his party are in a house, about a mile ahead, that belongs to him, and it is there the Princess Christina has been carried. At least I judge so, for I slipped from my horse and managed to find out that there were a number of soldiers about; and I spied a travelling carriage in front of the house with all the signs of a long journey on it. The horses had been taken out, and I judged it had just been left where it stopped, the horses being taken to the stables. I saw General Kolfort's party halt there, and he and one or two with him entered the house while the soldiers went round to the back.'

'How many soldiers in all?' I asked.

'From what I heard in the city last night, I gathered there were about a dozen in charge of the Princess; I counted another dozen with General Kolfort—say from twenty-five to thirty, all told, sir.'

'We can do it if we surprise them,' said I, turning to Zoiloff. 'Not so good a chance as we had just now, but still a chance.'

'Certainly,' he agreed. 'Catch them while off their guard and probably getting food after their ride;' and in less than a minute we were moving forward again, Markov riding on my left.

Just before we came in full view of the house, Zoiloff, Spernow, and I rode forward to reconnoitre the ground and plan the attack. The house lay well situated for such an attempt. We were looking down on it from a slight hill, and on three sides some fairly thick wood and shrubbery shut it in, in which a couple of regiments could have been posted had we had such a force available. We could see three or four men in the front of the house and in the road, left to do sentry work; but they were lolling about chatting together, and obviously thinking of nothing less than any such attack in force as we meditated; and, had we dashed up the road in a body, it was likely enough we could have carried the place before any effective resistance could have been offered.

But we formed a far different plan. Markov led us along the ridge of the hill fringed with trees to a point from which we could command a view of the rear of the house, and then I observed

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something that gave me an idea and made my heart leap with exultation. Preparations were going forward quickly to give the soldiers their breakfast, and I saw all the things being carried from the house to a low building across a wide yard that looked like a barn. The soldiers were chaffing the women and helping to carry the food and vessels; and in a moment my plan was ready.

'We shall catch them like rats in a trap,' I cried to Zoiloff, as I pointed this out to him. 'The place is made for us and couldn't be better. We'll time our visit when the men are just at breakfast yonder, and, if a couple of our fellows can steal up unseen, that big door can be slammed, and there won't be more than half a dozen left for us to deal with about the house. We shall cage the old fox to a certainty. Let Spernow and two men creep along this way and down under cover of those trees to the entrance to the yard, and post themselves there. The main portion can get to the house through the orchard below us'—and I pointed to the spots I meant—'and we shall be into the place before they even dream that we are near. Once we get close to the house, do you and half a dozen make for the front and settle with anyone there, making an exit from the house impossible. I'll enter by the back with the rest of us and square accounts with anyone inside. The horses must be left up here in the woods, tethered; we can't spare a man to stay with them.'

We discussed the minor points of the attack, fixed the moment, and left it that Spernow's closing the door upon the troops at breakfast should be the signal. If things went wrong with him and the men escaped, we settled that Zoiloff should, as arranged, rush round to the front, but that I and the men with me should hasten to Spernow's assistance and attack the men there.

We went back to the rest of the party, led them all into the wood on the hill from where we had made our observations, had the horses fastened over the hill and well out of sight of the house, and then, with arms all ready, crept back to the edge of the wood to wait for the moment to commence.

The movement and bustle of preparation were going on briskly below; the maids and the men were hurrying and scurrying in all directions, and there was such stir and life that it threatened to be impossible for us to creep down unseen.

Gradually there came a change. Things grew quieter, and presently the servant girls went into the house and did not return. We saw the soldiers, laughing and joking, cross in

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couples and threes to the barn; two of those who had been on guard in the front came running round, rested their muskets against the wall of the barn outside, and joined their comrades within; and the place was quiet and unguarded. I gave the word to advance, and a moment later we began to wend our way stealthily down the hill side, closing gradually on the house. Not a word was spoken, and not a sound betrayed our presence. When we reached the point where Spernow was to leave us to get to the other end of the yard, I whispered to him to take an extra man in case of emergencies, and then at the head of my men I threaded my way up the side of the orchard, with Zoiloff close in attendance.

All went well. We reached a low mud wall that parted the orchard from the homestead yard, and halted there until Spernow should give the signal by slamming-to the great barn door. By peering through the branches of some fruit trees I could see the spot where he was to post himself. Just when all was about in readiness, and he and his three men were standing at the end of the barn, round the corner of it fortunately, one of the soldiers came out, picked up one of the muskets leaning against the wall, and stood a moment laughing and chaffing with those within. He was one of the sentries, and called to those within to be quick. Then, whistling carelessly, he shouldered his weapon and moved away.

Moments were growing precious now. Would Spernow wait for the man to disappear round the front at the risk that others of the soldiers would finish and come out, or would he act while the man was in full view and take the risk of a shot? He was in dire hesitation; and I could see him peep round the corner of the barn and peer anxiously after the man.

Then something seemed to decide him—he told me afterwards he heard the men in the barn beginning to move—and with quick stealthy steps he and his men rushed to the great door, slammed it to, and secured it. The soldier was attracted by the noise, turned, saw what had happened, raised an alarm, and was in the act of firing at Spernow when one of the latter's men shot him and he fell to the ground.

At the same time Zoiloff called his followers and dashed for the front of the house, while I, seeing that all was well with Spernow, rushed to the back door. It was slammed in my face, but a blow from our guns smashed it in, and after a short delay we gained the passage.

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All the house was in wild alarm, and the soldiers in it put themselves in my way, offering a stubborn resistance. But we outnumbered them by three to one, and after a scrimmage that was hot enough while it lasted we overpowered them, struck their weapons from their hands, bound them, and thrust them into a room in the custody of a couple of men with strict orders to shoot if any nonsense was attempted.

Our surprise was in that respect completely and triumphantly successful, but in regard to one of the chief objects it failed. The way which we had chosen for Zoiloff to make his rush to the front of the house was blocked by some outhouses which we had not seen, and he and his men had had to return and run round to the other side. The delay caused was not long, but it was fatal, for the first thing he saw on reaching there was General Kolfort in company with a couple of attendants, presumably officers, spurring at topmost speed in the direction of Samakovo. He came rushing into the house, his face black in his deep disappointment, and told me the ill news, just as we had finished our scrimmage with the men inside.

I saw at once pursuit would be hopeless. I should not have dared divide our little party even had there been a good prospect of overtaking the fugitives, and to send them on a wild-goose chase would have been worse than madness; moreover, our horses were away on the top of the hill, and already somewhat spent with the fierce ride. But it took some moments to get Zoiloff to see the uselessness of such an attempt—moments that could ill be spared, seeing all that we had yet to do. But I was firm, and he gave in at length.

'Take our men and secure those fellows in the barn, or we shall have them breaking out. Find the best horses you can, too, and have them into the carriage as quickly as possible, and I will see the Princess and tell her to be ready at once. We dare not waste a minute or all will be lost.'

I dashed up the stairs, and after searching a couple of empty rooms found one with the door locked.

'Are you there, Princess? It is I, Count Benderoff,' I cried, turning the key and partly opening the door.

She answered me and I entered. She was calm but pale, with the little Broumoff at her side, very agitated.

'We have heard the noise, but could see nothing from here, and have been filled with anxiety as to what it meant. What has happened?' cried the Princess.

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'I can say no more now than that when we heard last night that you had been carried off we followed at once, and happily are now in possession of the house; but you must be ready to fly at once.'

'What of General Kolfort? He came here only a few minutes since and threatened me with all the terrors of a Russian gaol. He was like a madman.'

'Most unluckily he has escaped us, and may return at any moment in force. Will you get ready at once? Our only hope is to make for the frontier before we can be pursued.'

'I am ready now,' she cried, throwing on her travelling wraps. 'Come, Nathalie, come, the Count has saved us.'

The girl was dressed almost as quickly as the Princess, and together we went down to the front to wait for the carriage.

'Have you had anything to eat? We have a long journey before us.'

'I could not think of food.'

Without a word, I got some milk and cakes and bread, and put them in the carriage, to which Markov was already harnessing horses. Then I described in the fewest possible words what had happened, and they both listened in breathless interest.

'And Michel?' asked Mademoiselle Broumoff eagerly.

'Is safe,' I answered, with a smile, 'and has behaved splendidly, like the magnificent fellow he is.'

As soon as the carriage was ready I told Markov to draw out into the road in readiness to start, and I ran through to call off our men. Zoiloff met me excited, hot, and breathing hard.

'We have secured them all right. I filed up the men, and when we threw open the door the caged men were met with a line of muskets. They had no fight in them, for they had no arms. We have bound every man, and to make pursuit impossible I have had every horse in the stables shot. A cruel job, but necessary; and I have brought away the men's arms. We may start, Count. Our men are already away for their horses, and will meet us at that bend in the road above.'

'Good,' said I; but I wished he had brought the horses with us for remounts instead of shooting them.

'Good, yes; but much better if that wily old devil, Kolfort, hadn't slipped through my fingers.'

'What is the route, Markov?' I said, going out to him. 'We dare not return to Sofia. How can you reach the nearest point on the frontier road where we can get fresh horses for the carriage?'

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'We must go back to within three miles of the city, sir, and then I can pick a way round and strike the west road there.'

'Don't keep on this road for a yard longer than is absolutely necessary. It is dangerous. But do your best. Push on with all speed. We shall overtake you.'

As I finished speaking Spernow came running from the house and rushed to the carriage window. I let the carriage stand half a minute that he might exchange a word or two with Mademoiselle Broumoff, who I knew was very eager to see him, and while they were speaking the Princess looked out of the window, beckoned Zoiloff and gave him her hand and a word of hearty thanks for all he had done in her behalf.

It was a thoughtful, gracious act, and I was as glad as Zoiloff himself, who stood aside with a flush on his stern face to let the carriage pass when I gave the word to Markov to start.

'The fairest and best of all women on earth,' he said, enthusiastically, as we three watched the carriage dash up the hill that led from the house. 'I hope to heaven we shall get start enough to save her;' and he glanced back anxiously along the road that Kolfort had gone, as if he feared that pursuit might already be on foot.

And the same fear infected us all as we followed his gaze. But there was no sign of any pursuit; and we hurried up the hill to the spot where the men were to meet us with our horses.

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CHAPTER XXV.

SUSPENSE.

As we three hurried up the hill we discussed earnestly our plans; and the supreme seriousness of the failure to secure the person of General Kolfort grew more vividly forcible the more we considered it.

We could have held him a prisoner in his own house easily and without creating any alarm at his disappearance. And the Princess could have gained the frontier before ever a question had been asked as to her whereabouts. I gnashed my teeth as I thought of it.

Now, however, he would raise the alarm at the first possible

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moment. He knew that we were in considerable force, and not only could he send troops after us, but by telegraph he could send instructions to have us intercepted at any one of a dozen points.

'Does anyone know where the wires run from Ichtman and Samakovo to Sofia?' I asked. 'If we could cut them, we might save some hours when even minutes may be vital.'

'Of course. Why didn't we think of it before?' exclaimed Zoiloff. 'I know them. They run along the course of the projected railway. I can find them inside an hour. The line is to touch Liublian, and must run close here somewhere.'

'Then take a couple of men as soon as we are mounted and rattle off across country and cut them, and rejoin us with all possible speed. You will easily overtake the carriage;' and the moment we met our men he started to carry out the plan.

I then arranged the order of our ride. I left Spernow in command of the greater number of men, with orders to follow in straggling formation until we had passed through Liublian; then they were to close up and keep the carriage in sight. One man was to ride about a mile or so in the rear to watch for any signs of pursuit. For this work I chose the man whose horse was the fleetest and freshest, and ordered him to keep a sharp look-out behind him, and at the first sign of anything wrong to gallop after us at top speed to give us the earliest possible warning.

I myself took three men with me and rode forward at once, intending to overtake the Princess and act as immediate escort.

I had little difficulty, unfortunately, in getting up with the carriage, for Markov, with all his skill as coachman, was only able to make a very indifferent pace over the villainous roads. The carriage bumped and rolled and jumped in the deep ruts and over the stones in a way that filled me with alternate fear that it was travelling too fast for the safety of the occupants, and of despair that so slow a pace would make pursuit an easy enough matter.

It was a great, heavy, lumbering, travelling coach, built for the comfort of those who were content to travel at an easy rate; and about as little suited for the purpose of rapid flight as anything could be. I could have cursed it, as it lumbered along groaning, creaking, straining, threatening to topple over at every other lurch, and distressing the horses, powerful though they were, until the sweat lathered on their flanks and dripped on the rough, cruel road.

'Is there a hope of getting any better carriage at Liublian?' I asked Markov, riding up to him as we neared that place. 'We

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shall never reach the frontier in this thing; an open cart would be better. Try if you can't get something. Steal it if you can't hire or buy it.'

'The horses are nearly done already, your Honour,' said Markov; although we've only come some seven miles. I'll try.'

'You must be quick,' I said, as I fell back behind again.

Despite the very urgent need for haste, we entered the place, driving very leisurely, and drew up at the inn, when Markov and I entered to make inquiries. We were in luck. The man had a comparatively light open cart for sale and a couple of strong young horses. A few minutes found the bargain struck, and while my men were refreshing themselves the horses were put in, and Christina and her companion left the great, ugly, cumbersome carriage to take their places in the cart.

'Could we get peasants' clothes?' suggested Mademoiselle Broumoff. 'Any kind of disguise might help us.' It was a happy thought, and the ever resourceful Markov acted on the hint directly, and procured cloaks and headgear.

'Better put them on when we are clear of the place,' I decided, as Markov put the bundle into the cart.

'I am afraid you will find the road to safety very rough, Princess,' I said as I helped her into the cart. I had not spoken to her since leaving the General's house.

'I am causing you all sore trouble,' she answered, smiling sadly. 'How shall I ever thank you enough?'

'We shall have our reward when we see you safe in Servia.'

'Ah, I ought to have done what you advised yesterday and have gone then. All this would have been spared us.'

'We could not foresee what old Kolfort had planned for last night. I thought the road would have been as open to-day as it was yesterday.'

'It is like you to lighten the blame, but it is my fault.'

'We are ready, your Honour,' called Markov.

'Forward, then,' I said. 'Cautiously out of Liublian, and then press on with all the speed you can make.'

I mounted, and was in the act of starting when a horseman was seen riding hard up the road we had come. It was Zoiloff, and I welcomed him gladly.

'I've done it,' he said exultantly. 'I don't know whether there are any other wires, but I've cut the main ones, and that will probably cause some delay. But how came you to halt here?' he asked anxiously.

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I explained the change of vehicles, and we rode on after the Princess.

'You passed Spernow?' I asked.

'Yes, and left my men to follow with his. He tells me he is to join you as soon as he is clear of Liublian; he should be near now;' and he glanced back as I thought with some anxiety.

'We have done well so far. It was a stroke of luck to get rid of that lumbering old carriage,' said I.

'True, but we have already been a long time covering very little ground, and must press forward. Our pursuers won't sleep on the road. I'm surprised we haven't heard from them before now.'

It was unlike him to meet alarm halfway in this fashion, but I made no answer except to urge my horse to greater speed, so as to close up the distance between us and the Princess.

Markov was now driving at a very rapid rate, the road was much better, and I felt my spirits rise as we covered the ground quickly. Every yard gained safely made the prospect of escape more hopeful.

'Spernow should have joined us by now,' said Zoiloff again presently, as we were breathing the horses up a steep hill.

'We have been travelling much faster since we changed conveyances, and his cattle may be a bit stale,' I replied, trying to reassure him.

'I am afraid something's going wrong with him. It's not like him to play the laggard in this way. Can he have been overtaken by Kolfort's men and surprised?'

'Scarcely that. We've got a picket thrown out behind and he'd have warning. If there was any sign of danger, I told him to close up with us at once, so that we could make a stand together. One or two of the horses may have given out.'

'I don't like it,' said Zoiloff; and when we reached the top of the hill we turned and looked back along the white road, searching eagerly for some sign of Spernow's coming. We saw nothing, and the doubts which made Zoiloff's face so grave began to affect me.

'I am inclined to go back,' he murmured.

'We can't spare you, Zoiloff,' said I quickly. 'If anything is wrong with him, you alone can do no good; and if anything is to go wrong with us, we are too few already for safety.'

'I could find out what it means.'

'Or be cut off yourself;' and with that we resumed our ride my companion's face unusually gloomy and thoughtful.

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'How far are we from Sofia, Markov; and when do you turn off?' I asked, riding up to him.

'About five miles from the city, your Honour, a little more than two from the branch road I am making for.'

'We've only a few minutes more on the main road,' I said, falling back to Zoiloff; 'and, once away from it, our chances will be fifty in a hundred better. It's this road I've feared.'

'Ha! Here comes news!' exclaimed my companion suddenly, a few minutes afterwards, turning in his saddle and looking back. 'And bad news too,' he added.

A single horseman was dashing down a hill behind us, and as we turned a number of other horsemen reached the crest and came streaming down the hill after him, the sunlight glistening through the cloud of white dust as it fell on their arms.

'That should be Spernow and our men,' said I anxiously.

'It is Spernow, but they're not our men. I feared it meant mischief. They are troopers; and I can count a dozen of them. Tell Markov to drive like the wind. They're after us.'

A bend in the road at that moment cut off our view, and almost directly afterwards Markov turned away to the left into a narrow lane, putting his horses to the gallop.

'We shall have to fight for it, Count,' cried Zoiloff. 'There didn't seem more than a dozen troopers that I could see, and, with Spernow, we shall be six. We can hold them at bay in this narrow lane, and perhaps drive them off.'

At that moment a loud shout of dismay came from Markov, and we saw him pull his horses up in a scramble.

'What's the matter?' I called, riding up.

'I've taken the wrong lane, your Honour, cursed fool that I am,' he cried in sore distress. 'I know it now; there is no outlet. I should have driven on for about five hundred yards farther;' and he backed his horses as if to turn them.

It spelt absolute ruin.

'There's no going back, Markov,' I said decisively. I was calm enough now for all the trouble.

'The devil!' exclaimed Zoiloff. 'Well, we must make a fight of it.'

'Stay a moment. Where does this lane lead, Markov?'

'To a peasant's homestead, with no outlet anywhere.'

'Forward to that, then—at a gallop. We can hold the house against the men with far better chances than here,' I said to Zoiloff. 'Besides, they may not have seen us turn off the road, and may go on to the next turning. But what of Spernow?'

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'He was gaining on them fast, and will escape in any event,' said Zoiloff; 'but it's a perilous fix.'

A couple of minutes later we halted in front of the cottage, to the infinite surprise of the inmates. Markov knew them, however, and while he was explaining things to them the rest of us set to work to put the place in readiness to resist the expected attack. Fortunately it lent itself well to the purpose; and, long before the peasant owner had been pacified with a good round sum of money, every door and window was closed and barred, and the horses and cart had been stabled close to the rear of the house in a shed, the door of which we could easily command, so as to prevent anyone trying to steal off with them.

The Princess and her companion were placed in an upper room, well out of the danger of stray bullets; and, though we were breathless with our exertions, we were quite prepared to give our visitors a warm reception before a sign of the soldiers or of Spernow was visible.

Both Zoiloff and I kept an anxious look-out from a window in the roof of the cottage which gave a view of a considerable portion of a lane that led to the homestead; but the minutes crept on until a quarter of an hour, half an hour, an hour, passed without a sign or trace of either our friend or our enemies; and, indeed, until we grew as anxious to see the former as to know we had escaped from the latter.

What could it mean? Zoiloff and I exchanged many an anxious question and hazarded many futile guesses. I was inclined to hope that the soldiers had not seen us after all, and that in our little hiding-place we had not only escaped them, but had been overlooked by any other parties that might have been despatched in search of us.

At the end of an hour I sent Zoiloff down to see that food was prepared both for the men and for our horses; and when another hour passed without any sign of disturbance the hopes of all of us began to rise. The one thing that had caused me more anxiety than anything else was the obstacle which daylight presented to a successful flight; and when noon came and passed, and the afternoon shadows began to lengthen, I was glad enough; for every hour that passed diminished the risk and increased our chances of getting to the frontier unseen in the darkness of the night.

Moreover, the rest was just what the horses needed; and thus on both accounts the hanging hours of safety on that hot

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summer's day were doubly precious to us. Markov was certain that under the cover of the night he could find his road unerringly; and though his blunder in the morning had at first caused such a panic and had shaken my confidence in his knowledge, I was ready to believe him now.

'I could drive it blindfolded, your Honour,' he said earnestly, when I questioned him. 'I know every house, and cottage, and tree, almost ever bump in the road—more than that, I could find my way secretly across the country were every road and bridle-path choked with armed men. It is my own country!' he exclaimed vehemently.

'How long will it take you?'

'It is fifty miles from the frontier to the first place where I can get fresh horses, and perhaps fifteen from here to that—at the outside say seventy miles. I can do it in seven hours with such horses as are waiting for me at every stage—probably less.'

'You will be ready to start as soon as it is dusk,' I told him, and, as the afternoon passed, I went to acquaint the Princess with our plans.

'You have left us long alone, Count,' she said with a smile. 'And I have needed you sorely. Nathalie here is in distress for news of Lieutenant Spernow.'

'You may feel assured on his account,' I said to the girl, who was very pale and troubled. 'When we saw him last he was gaining rapidly on his pursuers, and was not at all likely to fall into their hands.'

'But where is he? Why have you no news of him?' she wailed.

'Probably he knows no more than our enemies where we are. But he is safe. Both Captain Zoiloff and I are convinced of that.' Her fears were not to be stayed by words, however, and in truth I myself had more than a misgiving on his account.

The Princess was eager for the moment to come when she could start, and would have set out at once had I not told her of the far greater security which darkness would afford.

'What time is it now?' she asked.

'Just past four. At seven, or soon after, we may venture to start; and if all goes well, as Heaven grant it may, you will be across the frontier and in safety before the sun rises again.'

'I shall owe it to you,' she said, 'as indeed I owe so much already.'

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'Not more to me than to all here with us. Indeed, this blessing of a shelter at the very nick of time we owe to the accident of Markov's blunder. We may well forgive him such a happy mistake.'

'Would you have me think I owe nothing to you?' she asked in a low voice, looking at me with a glance of love.

'Perhaps I may answer that question at a future time,' I returned in the same low tone. She blushed and dropped her eyes and was silent.

In the silence I heard the sounds of some commotion in the house below, and I started uneasily. 'Something has happened; I must go and see what it means!' I exclaimed; and with a hasty excuse I hurried away.

Something had indeed happened, for at the bottom of the stairs I found Spernow and Zoiloff in excited talk. I called them up, and together we entered the Princess's room, that he might tell us the story of his experiences, and relieve at once the anxiety of his sweetheart.

On seeing him she jumped up and, regardless of our presence, threw herself into his arms.

'Are you really safe, Michel?' she asked, gazing into his face with a look I could understand readily, and, laughing and crying by turns, she plied him with a hundred questions.

His story was of deep interest and moment to us, and, though I was in full mood to sympathise with the lovers, I was eager to hear it.

'I can tell my story in a very few words,' he said at length, turning to us. 'Just after we left Liublian we were attacked by a party that outnumbered us by five to one. Our man in the rear galloped up to warn us as you had ordered him, Count, but the troops were right on his heels, and, as our horses were anything but fresh, I dared not risk a race in the effort to reach you. I determined to fight it out there and then, but from the first we hadn't a chance. The troops fired not at us, but at the horses, until only two of us were left mounted. The rest you can gather. We had never a chance. My men resisted as long as resistance was possible, but one after another they were surrounded, disarmed, and secured. When all was lost we two fled, but some dozen of the troops came pricking after us. My companion's horse was shot; but almost by a miracle neither my horse nor myself was touched, though the firing was heavy enough. When I came down that hill yonder, I saw you, and saw you turn

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into the lane. In a moment I knew the mistake you had made, for I know this country to a yard, and it occurred to me to pass the entrance to the lane in the hope that the troops behind me had not seen you. I made for the next turning, therefore—that which you should have taken but happily did not—and to my intense relief the men behind, thinking no doubt that I was following you, followed me. The rest was easy enough. My horse was fleeter than theirs, and I led them a dance at a rattling speed for some ten miles. Then I dismounted, and, giving my horse a whack with my hand, sent him on without me, while I slipped into some bushes and waited for the men to pass. They did this, swearing prettily, as you may imagine, and as soon as they had gone by I set off across country in a bee-line for this place, thinking it not unlikely that you would take refuge here for a while. And here I am, and that's all.'

Our congratulations poured upon him, and then Zoiloff and I went away, that he and the little Broumoff might be together. It was the best reward we could make him just then.

'Those men will try back when they find he's fooled them,' said Zoiloff, 'and we had better be ready.'

'They'll have to come soon,' said I, 'or they'll find the nest empty and the birds flown.'

'They've over two hours yet,' he returned drily, and together we went back to our watch-window in the roof, giving orders that the house was to be kept as silent as if it were deserted.

The minutes were weighted now with the old fears and suspense, and scarce a word passed between my staunch friend and myself. And when we spoke it was in a whisper, as though the men had already come. For an hour more nothing occurred to disturb us, and once again the flame of hope began to kindle. But it was only to be ruthlessly quenched.

When a glance at my watch told me that an hour and a quarter had gone by, we saw that which made us start and draw breath quickly.

Two troopers came riding slowly up the lane, looking carefully to right and left as they approached. The peasant's dog barked loudly, and at the sound they stopped, and peered curiously at the house. Then they advanced until they stood close to the yard-gate, and both stared at the house and spoke together.

We held our breath in suspense.

The closed doors and shutters puzzled them, and after a few

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moments one of them dismounted, handed the reins of his horse to his companion, pushed open the gate, and walked up towards the house.

At that moment fortune served us a scurvy trick. Down below a roar of laughter broke out among our men, loud enough to reach us.

The soldier heard it too.

We heard him strike a lusty summons on the door panels and call to those within. Then everything was as still as the grave.

The man knocked again, and when the door remained unopened he went back to his companion, mounted his horse, and, giving some instructions, set off up the lane at a quick canter. The second man drew back into the shade of a tree and waited, keeping his eyes warily upon the house all the while.

'We may as well get the men posted,' said Zoiloff. 'That fellow will be back in a minute with all there are with him. We're in for a scrimmage.'

He went down at once to give the necessary orders, while I stayed to watch.

I had not long to wait. In a few minutes I heard the advancing footfalls of horses, and a number of troopers came swinging up the lane at the trot. I counted thirteen in all, and thanked Heaven there were no more.

But it meant fight, and I saw the man in command of the party taking his observations, and giving his instructions to those under him to surround the house.

There was no need for me to watch longer. There would soon be plenty of other work on hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FORLORN HOPE.

I LEFT the window and hurried down to tell the Princess the bad news. Spernow was still there, sitting apart, exchanging love confidences with Mademoiselle Broumoff, and they all started up at my sudden entrance.

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'The troops have found us out, Princess, and there will probably be some trouble before we get rid of them and shake them off. I wish to impress upon you the necessity for you to remain close in the corners of the room for fear of mishap. Spernow, will you go to Captain Zoiloff? He is below with the men.'

The Princess took the news very calmly.

'Do you think they will attack the house?' she asked.

'I fear so—or, rather, I hope so; for, if not, we shall have to attack them, and I would rather act on the defensive.'

'There will be danger for you,' she said earnestly, looking into my eyes. 'You will be careful—for my sake;' and she laid her hand on mine.

'I hope it will not be serious, and I will be careful,' I replied smiling. 'But we must not be beaten.'

'I trust no blood will be shed—no lives sacrificed. I cannot bear the thought of that.'

'We can have no thought but your safety.'

'But can we not be of some use—Nathalie and I?'

'I fear not, at present. But if there is need, depend upon it I will not fail to ask you. Come, Spernow.'

'Michel, let me have a gun. I would rather be by your side than cooped up here in suspense,' cried the girl with great spirit, holding her lover's hand. 'Now that you are with us I am not afraid.'

'We have not come to that yet, Mademoiselle,' I said, liking her spirit and courage. 'You need not be afraid. We are quite strong enough behind these walls to cope with the few men against us. But we must go.'

Christina pressed my hand again, and her lips murmured a prayer for my safety.

Zoiloff had been busy enough with his preparations, and when we reached him had posted his men. He had done a shrewd trick on leaving General Kolfort's house, and had brought away with him the men's carbines with a quantity of ammunition. These were now distributed in the rooms from which the work of defence was to be carried on; and he explained that his object was to create the impression that we were a much more numerous party than in reality.

'We can fire volleys from the different windows in very rapid succession, and they'll think the place is alive with men,' he said. 'But the main work must be done from the windows of each room on the floor above us. There are two in the front room and one

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at the back, and we can from there command the approach to the front and back doors, and could hold the place against four times the number.'

We went to the front room and looked out.

The soldiers were taking matters very leisurely. Evidently they were confident that they would have no serious difficulty in carrying the house, even if we were inside, of which they still seemed to have doubts.

The leader was only a non-commissioned officer—a troop sergeant—and he appeared to be at a loss what to do. He was consulting with the two men who had ridden up first, and all three were gesticulating freely as they pointed to different parts of the house and yard.

The longer they debated, and the more time they wasted, the better for us. If they would only let the afternoon steal away and twilight come, we could in the last resource make a sally, have a brush at close quarters, and then trust to our horses to save us.

'Zoiloff, I have a plan,' I said, as an idea struck me. 'That man has made a fool's mistake. Every horse there is in full view, and can be picked off easily. Let our first volleys, when it comes to firing, be for the horses. Before the men even guess our intention, every horse will be killed or disabled, and not only will the men be unable to follow us, but prevented from riding for help.'

'Good!' he cried. 'We'll have every man at these two windows, and each man shall pick out his own target. A couple of rounds well aimed and the thing's done. But some one must keep a look-out at the back.'

'Nathalie will do that,' said Spernow eagerly; and he went at once to ask her, while the men were brought into the room and their orders given to them. We waited, watching closely for the commencement of hostilities.

'They don't like the look of things,' whispered Zoiloff, smiling grimly, 'and don't know what to do or how to start. Ah, now they've settled something,' he added as the leader came towards the house, knocked at the door, and called in a loud voice for it to be opened.

No answer was given, of course, and after he had repeated his summons he called:

'If the door is not opened we shall break it in.'

Getting no reply, he returned to his men, and sent four of

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them round to the back of the house. Then one of the men called his attention to something at the side of the yard, and eight of them went and picked up a heavy balk of timber lying there.

'They're going to use it as a battering-ram,' said Zoiloff. 'We must stop that.'

'Wait,' I said quickly. 'When they are in position I'll warn them, and through the open windows we can then shoot the horses. Remember, men, level your guns first at the men, and when I tell you, aim at the horses, and shoot straight.'

The timber was heavy, the afternoon hot, the men fatigued and with no great zest for the business, so that they took a long time before they had brought it round near the door.

Then I threw up the window sharply, and called, in a ringing voice:

'Stop! We sha'n't allow that.'

Looking up, the troopers found themselves covered by the guns of our party, and, dropping the timber, they rushed like hares for cover—all save the leader, who flung curses at them for their cowardice.

'Now fire,' I said; and, levelling my rifle, I picked out a horse, and we fired our first volley.

'Quick! again!' and a second volley rang out.

The effect was indescribable. Five horses fell at the first round, and the rest stampeded and plunged so violently that any accurate aim the second time was very difficult. Only three fell, but the rest broke from their fastenings in a very frenzy of fear and galloped wildly off, plunging across country at a speed that made any thought of pursuit hopeless.

The men started to follow them, but were recalled by the leader, and came slinking back to cover like whipped dogs.

The loss of the horses was not their only misfortune, however, for in getting the log they had set down their carbines near the gate in a spot which we could cover with our guns. Seeing this, I called again:

'The man who touches one of those guns will be shot!'

The sergeant had plenty of pluck, and, though sorely perplexed by the turn things had thus suddenly taken, was as cool as if he had been on parade.

'What do you want here?' I cried.

'I want to know who's in the house,' he said.

'I am. What next?'

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'Who else?'

'I decline to say.'

'Will you surrender without causing any more trouble?' he asked coolly.

'If you ask that again, you'll stand a good chance of asking no more questions in this world,' said I drily. 'You had better draw off your men while they are still unhurt.'

'You can't hope to beat us off,' he said doggedly.

'We can try.' At the reply he shrugged his shoulders.

'If you resist you must take the consequences,' he called.

'I am quite prepared for that.'

He turned away then as if to walk back to his men, but I saw him start; and then he did a really plucky thing, like the daring devil he evidently was. When he was halfway towards his men he made a quick rush to the guns and tried to snatch them up in his arms and bolt with them to cover. It was wasted courage. A couple of guns rang out, Zoiloff's for one, and the man rolled over with a groan, shot through the leg, with the carbines scattered round him.

His men made no effort to go near him, and so long an interval of inaction followed that I began to hope the struggle was already over before it had well begun.

'Lucky we shot those horses, or we should have had half the scoundrels bolting for reinforcements,' muttered Zoiloff.

'You'd better see what the men at the back are after,' I said; and even as I spoke the little Broumoff came running excitedly to tell us they were trying to get our horses from the shed behind.

Zoiloff hurried out with a couple of men, and a moment later I heard an exchange of shots.

'Run and see what has happened, Spernow, and let me know,' I said, and in a couple of minutes he returned to say all was well, and that Zoiloff had wounded one of the men and scared them off. They had made for the side of the house, he told me, and had been joined by the rest of the troopers; unfortunately there was no window at the side, so that we could neither watch nor threaten them.

Another long interval passed without the troopers making a sign of any kind, and I judged that their intention was simply to keep watch until reinforcements could come up, and guessed that they had sent one or more of the men away on foot in search of help.

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It was now past six o'clock, and in less than half an hour it would be safe to make a start; I went to Zoiloff to consult.

My plan was to make a rush upon the men and drive them away sufficiently far to admit of our horses being put in the cart, and then risk the chances of flight. He agreed readily, for the inaction was vastly less to his mind than any fighting, and we made our preparations accordingly.

'We are seven to their nine or ten, say. The leader lies there wounded, you have disabled a second man, and they have sent away probably two and certainly one; and as we are armed and they are not, and we shall catch them unawares, we can certainly beat them off. We must then get the horses ready and be off. The sun's low now, and, as there is a mist rising, it will be dark enough for our purposes long before seven. And, anyway, we can't wait here to be trapped like rabbits as soon as they succeed in bringing up reinforcements.'

We set to work at once. The barricade of the back door was removed quietly and we all mustered by it in silence.

'Silence till we are outside,' I whispered. 'Then with a rush fall on them with more noise than force, and scare and drive them off.'

I lifted the latch noiselessly and, opening the door, stepped out, followed by the rest. Then with a loud shout we rushed round the house and caught the men as they stood smoking and talking, expecting nothing less than an attack from us.

They fled like chaff, helter-skelter in all directions, not venturing even a pretence at resistance. The two or three who had guns attempted to fire, but we struck up their arms and they fled as incontinently as the rest.

We made a show of pursuit, but it was no more than a show, and then all hands turned to the work of getting the horses harnessed and saddled. Meanwhile the mist was rising fast, and promised to form a welcome veil to our flight.

As a precaution I told one of our men to ride some distance along the lane to see that the road was clear, although I had no doubt that the troopers had been effectively disposed of; and I went to fetch the Princess and Mademoiselle Broumoff. All was ready and we were in good heart, when the man I had sent out came scampering back with news that filled me with sudden consternation.

He had seen a large body of horse soldiers at the end of the

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lane on the high road, and with them were several of the men we had just beaten off.

I heard the news with genuine anguish of soul. We were hemmed in. The absence of any outlet except by the lane made escape absolutely hopeless, and for a moment I was borne down with despair.

'We can only make a forlorn hope of it,' said Zoiloff. 'Charge them and try to make off in the confusion.'

I bit my lip and racked my brains in the effort to find some other than this useless, desperate scheme, and then suddenly a light beamed through the darkness.

'Markov, can you find your way across the fields at the back here to the road—on horseback I mean?'

'Yes, certainly, your Honour, but with the cart——'

'Zoiloff, good friend, we must part now. There is only one way. You and Markov must ride with the Princess on horseback, escaping by the back across the fields till you strike the road. I must go in the cart with Mademoiselle Broumoff, if she is brave enough to risk this for the Princess;' and I looked at her eagerly.

'I will do anything,' she assented readily.

'It will make them think that only we six were in the house here; that Mademoiselle Broumoff is the Princess, and that we are making the rush to escape after the fight just now.'

'I cannot consent to that,' said Christina earnestly. 'You will be going to certain capture.'

I drew her aside from the rest to urge her, and Zoiloff, understanding things with the quick instinct of a friend, led them out of the room on the plea of hastening the preparations.

As soon as we were alone she threw off all reserve, putting her hands on my shoulders and gazing at me with glowing eyes.

'Do you press me to do this?' she pleaded.

'I must; it is your only hope of safety, and a desperate one at the best.'

'You love me—Gerald?'

At the sound of my name, spoken prettily in tremulous hesitation, I felt the blood rush to my face.

'With my whole heart,' I cried hoarsely.

'Do not send me from you, then; I urge you, by our love. Let us face what has to come together. I could meet death with you, but without you I am a coward. I cannot go.'

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'You must go, Christina,' I said in a low voice, and scarcely steadier than her own.

'It is sending you to death, Gerald. I cannot do it. I could not live if harm came to you through me.'

'No such harm as that can come. But, for God's sake, think. If we remain together now it can be but for a few minutes. If we fell into these men's hands, their first act would be to separate us. You must go, my darling, you must.'

She gave a deep, heavy, sobbing sigh, and let her head fall on my shoulder.

'It is worse than death to go alone like this.'

'It is our only chance for a happier life. You must go, and even these moments of delay are imperilling everything. You must go—and at once. God knows how gladly I would have you stay with me if I dared.'

'Then go with me. Captain Zoiloff will——' The look on my face checked the sentence. 'Oh, I cannot part with you, I cannot!' She moaned in such agony that my heart ached. 'We may never meet again.'

'We shall meet again with you in safety, do not fear,' I said, trying to put a ring of hope into my voice, though my heart echoed her cry. 'You must go, my dearest;' and I began to lead her to the door, for every moment now might turn the balance between safety and capture.

As I moved she threw herself into my arms and clung to me convulsively. I held her to my heart; her face was close to me; my lips sought hers, and our very souls seemed to rush together in that kiss.

'Till death, Christina,' I whispered passionately.

'Till death, Gerald,' she answered; and then with a long trembling sigh she drew from me. 'Oh, how hard is fate!'

'Come, sweetheart,' I said; and without another word I led her out to the horses, to where good Zoiloff was waiting with gloomy growing impatience.

I lifted her tenderly to the saddle, and with a last yearning look and a lingering pressure of the hand I turned away, sick and sad with the sorrow of it all.

Zoiloff was mounted by then, and I wrung his hand.

'Guard her with your life, friend.'

'With my life,' he answered to the full as earnestly as I.

The plucky little Broumoff was already in the cart, with

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Spernow close to her, and in another moment I was by her side.

There was still no sign of any troopers, and as for my scheme it was necessary that they should see us, I led my party round to the front.

'When you hear the sound of our wheels, steal off at once, and make across the fields there for the road,' I said, as a last word; 'you will be out of sight in the mist before the men have a thought that we are not all together. Good-bye, and may God speed you!'

'Amen to that,' came in Zoiloff's deep voice, and for the last time I met Christina's eyes.

When I reached the front of the house I waited a moment, listening intently, and then hearing the sound of horsemen coming up the lane I started my horses, and as soon as we were through the gate I whipped them and dashed along the lane at a smart gallop, just as the foremost couple of troopers loomed into sight through the shroud of the white mist.

(To be continued.)

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At the Sign of the Ship.

THE tedium of endless rain and impenetrable darkness in a Highland lodge is mitigated by the first numbers of the *Edinburgh Review*. Reading them, one looks across a whole century of literature, and is as remote from Jeffrey as Jeffrey was from Dean Swift, whom he hated so soundly. Jeffrey found that Queen Anne's wits—Pope, Swift, Addison, and the rest—no longer 'enter necessarily into the instruction of a liberal education.' Yet nearly a century later—namely, to-day—not to know Queen Anne's wits and their works is not to be liberally educated. In 1816 Jeffrey could talk of 'the decay of their reputation,' which after all has not decayed. The *Edinburgh* critics were applauding Byron's Corsairs and Medoras with both hands. It was before the newly risen glory of the *Corsair* that Swift and Pope were fading, like stars at dawn. But who reads the *Corsair* to-day? Says Jeffrey: 'We are of opinion that the writers who adorned the beginning of the last century have been eclipsed by those of our own time'—that is, practically, by 'the noble poet' Byron, for Jeffrey thought little of Scott's verse, and less than nothing of Wordsworth and of Coleridge. Shelley and Keats did not yet enter into the reckoning at all.

* * *

Byron, however, had praised Coleridge, so had Scott. The *Edinburgh* suspected 'that what is thus lavishly advanced may be laid out with a view to being repaid with interest.' The authors of the *Lay* and of the *Corsair* were 'log-rollers;' they applauded the author of *Christabel* merely that he might applaud them. Or perhaps their praise was a Tory job. 'We cannot help wishing . . . that they would pay in solid pudding, not in empty praise,' would give places and pensions 'instead of puffing bad poetry, and endeavouring to cram nonsense down the throats of all the loyal and well affected.'

* * *

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Coleridge was thought a bad poet; Byron was almost another Shakespeare. Pope and Swift were eclipsed, in the opinion of these critics of 1816. Time has brought in his revenges: Byron has found his place; Coleridge has found his; Queen Anne's wits are still standing where they have always stood. This is the more comforting, as it suggests that critics of to-day are not infallible, and that the reputation of Tennyson may survive the censure of the late regretted Mr. George W. Steevens. In a volume styled *Things Seen*, remains of Mr. Steevens culled from the columns of the daily press and other sources, one finds an article on *In Memoriam*. For reasons not obvious, it is headed 'The New Tennyson.' The critique was written in 1893, when Mr. Steevens must have been very young. He remarks, as to the metre of *In Memoriam*, that 'it is made to bleat in.' Even that opinion may not survive for a century; like the judgment of Jeffrey and his staff, it may become a thing to marvel on. Mr. Steevens also remarked, as to *In Memoriam*, that 'the voice is not the voice of grief, and the words are hard to understand. Also they are not worth understanding.' It seems a pity to give a kind of permanence to this early critical exercise of Mr. Steevens. Better were it 'to wipe it up, and say nothing about it.' So I venture to think. But what am I? What is any critical body? Perhaps Mr. Steevens may have been right; perhaps he was as far adrift as Jeffrey and Hazlitt. Perhaps Tennyson 'has invented a new language, the language of the refined, Sentimental Coward.' Unluckily one cannot know what people will think a hundred years hence. If they still care for poetry, they may prefer the raucous voice of the Sentimental Costermonger to the 'bleatings' of the late Poet Laureate—bleatings which are 'not worth understanding.' Far be it from me to prophesy. Still, I really do think that it would have been better to suppress this early essay in criticism, on the chance of its being a trifle immature and crude. Mr. Steevens called *In Memoriam* 'a dandy heart-break.' Even so did Carlyle call Byron 'a dandy of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' These are not difficult or expensive epigrams; a man could make any number of them, 'if he abandoned his mind to it.' It is not to be certainly known that Mr. Steevens would have adhered to these ideas of his in later life. He was only twenty-four, or so, when he wrote about 'dandy heart-break'—only as old as Mr. Kipling was when he published *Plain Tales from the Hills*, a work not to be wiped out by time. Mr. Kipling, to be sure, when he acknowledged the praises of Tennyson, addressed him as a

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private soldier addressing his general. That seems to me the preferable attitude of a young man of genius. Time will judge and the coming generations; but who shall forecast their verdict? It must be remembered that Mr. Steevens's criticism was written as if *In Memoriam* were a new book, just out, and to be treated as new books usually are treated by the press. Of that kind of critique the article is a good imitation, and the phrases which appear so crude may be successful strokes of satire, not at a poet, but at young reviewers, or old reviewers, for the person who criticised *Christabel* in the *Edinburgh Review* declared it to be as unintelligible as Mr. Steevens found *In Memoriam*. Coleridge's censor was probably Hazlitt, who was old enough to know better.

* * *

More than once I have been chidden as a frivolous writer; and now I learn from the *Spectator* that I have been the occasion of frivolity in the editor of *The Critical Review*. It is a serial of which I never heard in my life. Nor, I fear, am I better acquainted with its editor, 'Principal Salmond, of the Scotch Free Church.' It appears that the light-hearted divine has asked, in his own *Critical Review*, 'whether it is true that' I am 'busy on a volume of sermons.' If the festive Free Kirk Principal will promise to preach it, I will gladly write *one* sermon for him; but I have heard that other men of letters are in the habit of supplying the needs of the clergy of all denominations at a very moderate figure. It is not my desire to undersell my theological comrades, but just one sermon is much at the Principal's service on the easy terms already mentioned. Many laymen, I have observed, pine to let some sermons out of them; it is no temptation to my virtue. Yet the longing is not unnatural; we hear so many sermons which we think we could rival in learning, logic, and eloquence if the pulpit were only thrown open to the laity. The early Scotch Reformers, if I do not misunderstand them, thought that sermons were directly inspired. If Principal Salmond entertains that opinion, he will reject my offer, as I am not in Presbyterian orders. Perhaps, by mere dint of bad example, I may so increase the frivolity hinted at by *The Spectator*, that the Principal will become a stone of stumbling to the godly. In that case, if he feels in danger, he may take a course of Dr. McCrie's historical works.

* * *

Modern education does not seem to encourage a thoughtful habit of mind. Many persons can write letters who, for all that,

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seem literally to possess no mind at all. They often write to me, and, doubtless, to other strangers, asking questions which, as they ought to know, cannot be answered by anyone short of a clairvoyant. Thus a lady actually writes to tell me that she has, in Australia, a book of a certain date which she does not remember, printed by the Aldi of Venice. She does not remember the name of the book, she does not remember the name of the author, and she asks me to estimate the pecuniary value of this mysterious treasure, now in the Antipodes. Yet more bewildering was a joint feat by a lady and a clergyman. The *padre* called at my house, and told me that he was an envoy from a Miss Somebody, of whose existence I had never heard. She desired me to tell her the name of a very valuable book which she thought that her father had once possessed, and she wished to know whether it was still in her library. This was as hard as the question put by Nebuchadnezzar to his diviners, when the king wanted to know what he had dreamed, and also the interpretation of the dream. I could not, of course, tell the parson the name of the book which his friend herself did not know, except by information derived from her dead father; and I doubt if a Christian is permitted to get knowledge through necromantic arts. But, even when inquiring book-owners do know the name of the book whose value they wish to ascertain, it would be better for them to consult Mr. Slater's volumes on the book-sales of the year or a respectable bookseller than to inquire of me as of an Oracle. A book may be of the right date, and yet, from some defect in condition, may be worth little or nothing.

* * *

As another example of lack of thought, I may mention this: An anecdote of the death of a Boer soldier was lately told in these pages, on the authority of an eye-witness. Thereon a gentleman wrote to tell me that this Boer had slain a friend of his, and asked me whether my informant, who reported the death of the Boer, was his friend, whom the Boer had previously killed. Now how could a dead man describe the slaying of his own slayer? Not to perceive such difficulties as these really does imply a lack of precision of thought among the educated.

* * *

If only Mr. Horace Hutchinson were here, in a place so lazy that 'it seemeth always after lunch!' Then we could discuss his 'Dreams' without the trouble of writing. His explanation of a dream in which a poor French scholar talks with some one who

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speaks French far beyond what the dreamer can supply, is probably correct. The dreamer is merely over-estimating the elegance of the French which his own mind is supplying. But Maury (whom Mr. Hutchinson has read, as I infer) gives many examples in which the dreamer knows, and puts into the mouth of another character, things which he does not know (consciously) when awake. Dreaming, he can dive deeper into his store of memories than he can when awake. The book of Karl du Prel (which Mr. Hutchinson seems not to have read) is full of examples, and ought to interest people who care for these topics. The title ('The Philosophy of Mysticism') may alarm, but anyone can read the anecdotes. Many more will be found in a book which Messrs. Longman announce, 'Human Personality,' by Mr. F. W. H. Myers. This, I venture to predict, will be *the* book on these subjects.

* * *

Our minds are usually at a low ebb in sleep, as Mr. Hutchinson justly remarks. But he need not be so sceptical as to cases in which the sleeping mind, whether in ordinary sleep, or somnambulism, or hypnotic trance, is much more acute than in waking life. From St. Augustine's works to the excellent 'Intellectual Powers' of Dr. Abercromby, he will find plenty of well-authenticated examples. In the 'Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research,' vol. xii. p. 14, is Professor Hilprecht's own account of how, in a dream, he correctly solved an almost insoluble problem of Assyriology. His waking mind possessed all the materials for the solution, except the colour of an agate on which a fragmentary inscription was engraved. His dreaming mind solved the problem. An Assyrian priest, in the dream, gave the correct answer, which Mr. Hilprecht verified by a visit to the Sultan's Museum at Constantinople. Of course this kind of thing is unusual, but it undeniably does occur.

* * *

As for 'the people who say they fly,' of course it is easier to say that they lie. The difficulty is not with them; but with the great mass of sworn evidence by spectators, for which Mr. Hutchinson may refer to the *Acta Sanctorum*, the witch trials, and many other sources. The Lives of St. Colette and of St. Joseph of Cupertino will be enough for his purpose. When I dream that I float in air I also dream that I beg the spectators to make a note of it; an instance of professional pre-occupation.

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I do not see how we can doubt that a dreamer who, in sleep, talks and describes the events of his dream, really *is* dreaming, though when he wakens he remembers nothing about it. This does not seem to satisfy Mr. Hutchinson; to me it appears demonstration absolute. As to the dream of strange scenery (not in my own experience), a lady tells me that she dreamed of seeing a singular glen marked by a very peculiar tree in the hills of Glencoe. Some time later she found the glen, tree and all, on the spurs of Ben Cruachan, which she had not previously visited. I never dreamed, as Mr. Hutchinson does, of hearing a sentence loudly uttered, in a familiar voice, after which he wakes. But a friend of mine did; the voice was that of his brother, then in Canada, who happened to die suddenly on that night. But, to my friend's joy he heard the voice (owing to the difference of longitude) some five hours *before* his brother's sudden death. So, as my friend remarked, 'it did not count.' In my case, unlike Miss Cobbe's, there *is* 'dream consciousness' before a dream of falling down from a height. I am on the height, for good dream reasons. I have to descend, I fall, and float pleasantly to the bottom. A friend tells me, as I write, that her experience is the same as mine. There seems to be plenty of variety, even in these stereotyped dreams.

* * *

Never shall we know the exact truth, but I feel convinced that Queen Mary Stuart had an undiscovered affair of the heart some time before 1566. Elsewhere I have published the story, from Dr. Gregory's *Letters on Animal Magnetism*, of a young officer, who, in 1845, had a vision of a diamond cross, worn by Mary under her bodice. Then I consulted the inventory of Mary's bequests of her jewels, in 1566, an inventory not discovered till long after 1845. Here one found a diamond jewel which the Queen entrusted to Joseph Riccio, to be carried to a person whose name she could only tell verbally to her messenger. This is a pleasant coincidence, but it is yet more curious to find that, when Mary, a prisoner in England, was coquetting with the Duke of Norfolk, she wrote to him saying that she wore a diamond, his gift, secretly, under her dress. She longs for the day when his diamond and herself shall be the Duke's very own. This was in 1569. Mary, it would seem, was in the habit of wearing a concealed jewel, associated with a secret friend. But who was the donor to whom, in 1566, a diamond jewel was to be secretly restored, in case of the Queen's death? It could hardly be

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Bothwell, for she left jewels to him, openly and by name. It does look as if there was an unknown person of importance in the secret history of this unhappy Princess.

* * *

But what is her secret history to that of Queen Elizabeth, as set forth in *Francis Bacon's Cipher Story*? I have not seen this work, whereof an account appears in the New York *Saturday Review*. The author's name is not given; the publishers are The Howard Publishing Company, Detroit, Michigan. The gist of the revelation is that Francis Bacon was the son of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, by a secret marriage with Queen Elizabeth. But, if Elizabeth was married to Leicester, how could she offer him as a bridegroom to Mary Stuart? At the age of seventeen, Bacon was sent to France, because his Royal mother disapproved of his play, *Hamlet*, and did not wish the Prince of Wales, for he was no less, to write for the stage. Bacon, being now eighteen, fell in love with Margaret of Valois, wife of Henri of Navarre. Margaret was twenty-six, but she also fell in love with Francis Bacon, Prince of Wales; by the way it is not said that he had actually been created Prince of Wales. It was to Margaret that Bacon wrote Shakespeare's sonnets. But the course of true love did not run smooth, and Francis and Margaret were separated for ever.

* * *

All these facts are derived by me from an article signed 'Agnostic,' in the journal already mentioned. Probably they are only a parody of the many absurd romances about Bacon and Shakespeare, which so strangely fascinate the quarter-educated. 'Agnostic,' no doubt, is mocking the discoverers of ciphered mysteries in the plays. But Mr. John Malone declares that he was asked to read a play by a Dr. ——, based on some such mare's nest, and was actually offered 'a cheque for a considerable sum in exchange for a letter giving a favourable opinion of the —— cipher theory.' Of course he declined. Yet another Shakespearean assures us that there were no guns or gunpowder in England in 1402, the date of the battle of 'Holmedon Hill.' Surely this is an error in military history. Barbour speaks of 'crakkis of war,' and Barbour wrote long before 1402.

* * *

'There is no British or American lyric equal to O'Hara's.' What is O'Hara's tremendous piece? Here it is. Doubtless it is

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better than any British lyric, but I think that some American lyrics are of at least equal merit. I fear that 'Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone' is a little obscure, and 'advance' decidedly does not rhyme to 'haunts.' In some versions 'Angostura' is suppressed, perhaps as vulgarised by Angostura bitters.

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
  The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on Life's parade shall meet
  That brave and fallen few.
On Fame's eternal camping ground
  Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards, with solemn round,
  The bivouac of the dead.

No rumor of the foe's advance
  Now swells upon the wind;
No troubled thought at midnight haunts
  Of loved ones left behind;
No vision of the morrow's strife
  The warrior's dream alarms;
No braying horn, no screaming fife,
  At dawn shall call to arms.

Their shivered swords are red with rust,
  Their plumed heads are bowed;
Their haughty banner trained in dust
  Is now their martial shroud—
And plenteous funeral tears have washed
  The red stains from each brow,
And the proud forms by battle gashed
  Are free from anguish now.

The neighing troop, the flashing blade,
  The bugle's stirring blast,
The charge, the dreadful cannonade,
  The din and shout are past—
Nor War's wild note, nor Glory's peal,
  Shall thrill with fierce delight
Those breasts that never more may feel
  The rapture of the fight.

Like the fierce Northern hurricane
  That sweeps his great plateau,
Flushed with the triumph yet to gain,
  Came down the serried foe—

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Who heard the thunder of the fray
  Break o'er the field beneath,
Knew well the watchword of that day
  Was 'Victory or Death!'

* * * *

Full many a Norther's breath hath swept
  O'er Angostura's plain,
And long the pitying sky has wept
  Above its moldered slain.
The raven's scream, or eagle's flight,
  Or Shepherd's pensive lay,
Alone now wake each solemn height
  That frowned o'er that dread fray.

Sons of the Dark and Bloody Ground!
  Ye must not slumber there,
Where stranger steps and tongues resound
  Along the heedless air.
Your own proud land's heroic soil
  Shall be your fitter grave;
She claims from War his richest spoil—
  The ashes of her brave.

Thus 'neath their parent turf they rest,
  Far from the gory field;
Born to a Spartan mother's breast
  On many a bloody shield.
The sunshine of their native sky
  Smiles sadly on them here,
And kindred eyes and hearts watch by
  The heroes' sepulchre.

Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead!
  Dear as the blood ye gave!
No impious footstep here shall tread
  The herbage of your grave;
Nor shall your glory be forgot
  While Fame her record keeps,
Or Honor points the hallowed spot
  Where Valor proudly sleeps.

Yon marble minstrel's voiceless stone
  In deathless song shall tell,
When many a vanished year hath flown
  The story how ye fell.

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Nor wreck, nor change, nor Winter's blight,
  Nor Time's remorseless doom,
Can dim one ray of holy light
  That gilds your glorious tomb.

THEODORE O'HARA.

* * *

These verses, it appears, are the original form of a poem which has been much altered and 'contaminated' by editors, authorised or not authorised, in many popular editions. The merit of the work is rather elegiac than militant. The battle with its passion is ended, there remain pride and regret. Now these are really the motives of the best military poems; nay, from the *Chanson de Roland* to *The Flowers of the Forest*, or *Marmion*, the best war-poems rather celebrate disaster than victory. It is for the Lost Cause, or for the fallen in fight, that the muse sings her best, with rare exceptions, such as Drayton's *Agincourt*. Perhaps the mere joy of battle has never, or has rarely, inspired any poets except the wild skalds of the Sagas—men like Egil Skalagrim.

ANDREW LANG.

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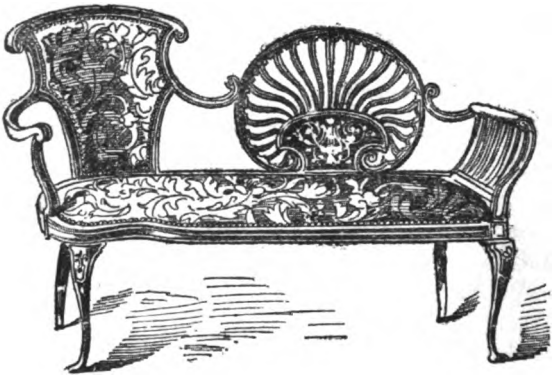

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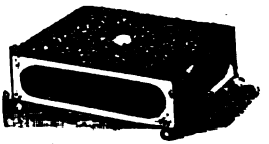

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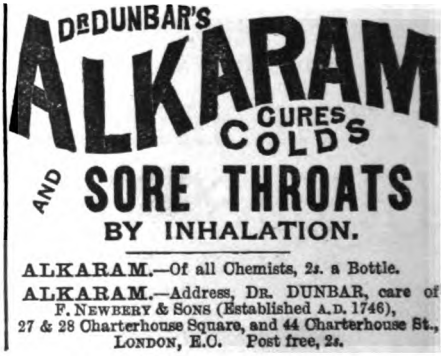

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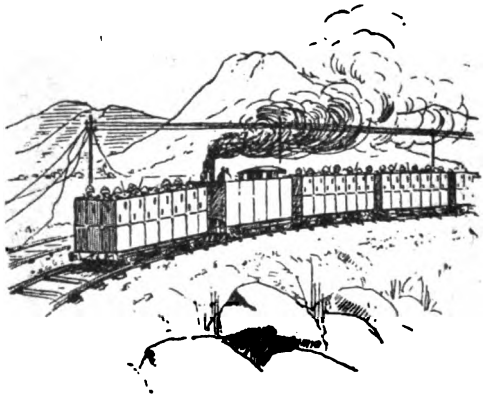

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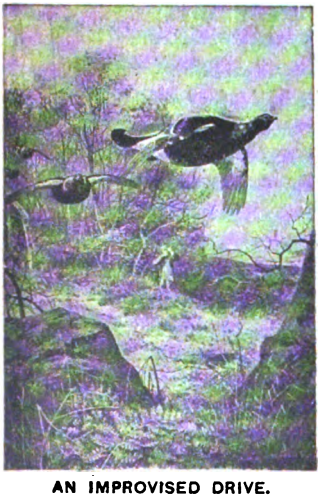

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